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SERMONS

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the most Reverend

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

L A T E

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* FOURTH.



L O N D O N :

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S E R M O N L I.

Of the education of children.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I Have on purpose chosen this text for the subject S E R M.
LI. of a preparatory discourse in order to the reviving of that so shamefully neglected, and yet most useful and necessary duty of catechising children and young persons: But I shall extend it to the consideration of the education of children in general, as a matter of the greatest consequence both to religion and the publick welfare.

For we who are the ministers of God ought not only to instruct those who are committed to our charge in the common duties of christianity, such as belong to all christians, but likewise in all the particular duties which the several relations in which they stand to one another do respectively require and call for from them.

And amongst all these I know none that is of greater concernment to religion and to the good order of the world, than the careful education of children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires a more prudent

SER M. and diligent and constant application of our best
 LI. care and endeavour.

It is a known saying of Melancthon that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere*; "to bear and bring forth children, "to instruct and bring them up to be men, and to "govern them when they arrive at man's estate." The instruction and good education of children is none of the least difficult of these. For to do it to the best advantage does not only require great sagacity to discern their particular disposition and temper, but great discretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewise continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to religion and virtue.

It requires great wisdom and industry to advance a considerable estate, much art and contrivance and pains to raise a great and regular building: But the greatest and noblest work in the world, and an effect of the greatest prudence and care, is to rear and build up a Man, and to form and fashion him to piety, and justice, and temperance, and all kind of honest and worthy actions. Now the foundations of this great work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of children, that it may rise and grow up with them; according to the advice of the wise man here in the text, "Train up a child in the "way he should go, and when he is old he will not "depart from it."

In which words are contained these two things.

First, the duty of parents and instructors of children, "Train up a child, &c." By childhood here I understand the age of persons from their birth, but

but more especially from their first capacity of instruction till they arrive at the state and age which next succeeds childhood, and which we call youth; and which is the proper season for confirmation. For when children have been well catechized and instructed in religion, then is the fittest time for them to take upon themselves and in their own persons to confirm that solemn vow which by their sureties they made at their baptism.

“Train up a child in the way he should go,” that is, in the course of life that he ought to lead; instruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty to God and men, which he ought to observe and perform all the days of his life.

Secondly, here is the consequent fruit and benefit of good education: “And when he is old he will not depart from it.” This we are to understand according to the moral probability of things: Not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good education of a child, but that this very frequently is, and may probably be presumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent education. Solomon means that from the very nature of the thing this is the most hopeful and likely way to train up a child to be a good man. For as Aristotle truly observes, “Moral sayings and proverbial speeches are to be understood only ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, that is, to be usually and “for the most part true.” And though there may be several exceptions made, and instances given to the contrary, yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them: But if in frequent and common ex-

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perience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, because it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this aphorism or proverb of Solomon in the text; and so likewise are most of the wise sayings of this book of the Proverbs, as also of Ecclesiastes: And we do greatly mistake the design and meaning of them whenever we go about to exact them to a more strict and rigorous truth, and shall upon due consideration find it impossible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the text may be fully comprised in the following proposition.

“ That the careful, and prudent, and religious education of children hath for the most part a very good influence upon the whole course of their lives.”

In the handling of this argument I design by God’s assistance, to reduce my discourse to these five heads.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good education of children doth consist, and severally consider the principal parts of it.

II. I shall give some more particular directions for the management of this work in such a way as may be most effectual for its end.

III. I shall take notice of some of the common and more remarkable miscarriages in the performance of this duty.

IV. I shall endeavour to make out the truth of this proposition, by shewing how the good education of children comes to be of so great advantage, and

and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole lives.

V. And lastly; I shall, by the most powerful arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good education of children doth consist, and severally consider the principal parts of it. And under this head I shall comprehend promiscuously the duty of parents, and, in case of their death, of guardians; and of godfathers and godmothers; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them, because the children for whom they are sureties are seldom under their power: And the duty likewise of those who are the teachers and instructors of them: And the duty also of masters of families towards servants in their childhood and younger years: And lastly the duty of ministers, under whose parochial care and inspection children are as members of the families committed to their charge: I say, under this head I shall comprehend the duties of these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these eight particulars, as the principal parts wherein the education of children doth consist.

First, in the tender and careful nursing of them.

Secondly, in bringing them up to be baptized and admitted members of CHRIST's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, in a due care to inform and instruct them in the whole compass of their duty to God and their neighbour.

Fourthly, and more especially in a prudent and diligent care to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue.

Fifthly, in giving them good example.

Sixthly, in wise restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable reproof and correction.

Seventhly, in bringing them to be publickly catechized by the minister in order to confirmation.

Eighthly, in bringing them to the bishop to be solemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the vow which by their sureties they enter'd into at their baptism.

I. In the tender and careful nursing of children. I mention this first, because it is the first and most natural duty incumbent upon parents towards their children: And this is particularly the duty of mothers. This affection and tenderness, nature, which is our surest guide and director, hath implanted in all living creatures towards their young ones: And there cannot be a greater reproach to creatures that are endued with reason, than to neglect a duty to which nature directs even the brute creatures by a blind and unthinking instinct. So that it is such a duty as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to nature, and from which nothing can excuse but disability, or sickness, or the evident danger of the mother, or the interposition of the father's authority, or some very extraordinary and publick necessity.

This

This I foresee will seem a very hard saying to nice ^{SERM.} and delicate mothers, who prefer their own ease and ^{LI.} pleasure to the fruit of their own bodies : but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think myself obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be so faithful as to tell them that this is a natural duty ; and because it is so, of a more necessary and indispensable obligation than any positive precept of revealed religion ; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying sins of this age and nation ; and which, as much as any sin whatsoever, is evidently a punishment to itself in the palpable ill effects and consequences of it : which I shall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to represent ; that if it be possible, we may in this first point of education, so fundamental and necessary to the happiness both of parents and children, and consequently to the publick good of humane society, be brought to comply with the unerring instinct of nature, and with the plain dictate of the common reason of mankind, and the general practice of all ages and nations.

First, the neglect of this duty is a sort of exposing of children ; especially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always exposeth them to manifest inconvenience, and sometimes to great danger ; even to that degree as in the consequence of it is but little better than the laying a child in the streets, and leaving it to the care and compassion of a parish. There are two very visible inconveniencies which do commonly attend it.

1st, Strange milk, which is very often disagreeable to the child, and with which the child to be sure sucks in

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the natural infirmities of the nurse, together with a great deal of her natural inclinations and irregular passions, which many times stick by the child for a long time after : and which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens that some secret disease of the nurse is conveyed to the child.

2dly, A shameful and dangerous neglect of the child, especially by such nurses as make a trade of it ; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great city : who, after they have made their first and main advantage of the child by the excessive, not to say extravagant vails, which usually here in England, above all other places in the world, are given at christnings : and then by the great allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nursing and keeping of the child, are often tempted, not to say worse, to a great neglect of the child ; which, if it happen to die for want of due care, sets the nurse at liberty to make a new advantage by taking another child.

Nor can it well be otherwise expected than that a nurse, who by this course is first made to be unnatural to her own child, should have no great care and tenderness for a child which is not her own.

I have heard a very sad observation made by those who have had the opportunity to know it, that in several of the towns and villages about London, where this trade of nursing children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of these children lives out the year : and this surely is a danger which natural affection as well as duty does oblige parents to take all possible care to prevent.

Secondly, this course doth most certainly tend very much to the estranging and weakning of natural af-

fection

fection on both sides; I mean both on the part of ^{SERM.} the mother and of the child. The pains of nursing ^{LI.}

as well as of bearing children doth insensibly create a strange tenderness of affection and care in the mother. "Can a woman, says God, forget her suck- ^{Isa. xlix.}

ing child, that she should not have compassion on ^{15.}

"the son of her womb?" Can a woman? that is, a mother, not a nurse; for the sucking child is said to be the son of her womb. God speaks of this as a thing next to impossible.

And this likewise is a great endearment of the mother to the child: which endearment, when the child is put out, is transferred from the mother to the nurse, and many times continues to be so for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree as if the nurse were the true mother, and the true mother a mere stranger. So that by this means natural affection must be extremely weaken'd; which is great pity, because when it is kept up in its full strength it often proves one of the best securities of the duty of a child.

But because this severe doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I must take the more care to guard it against the objections which will be made to it. Those from natural disability, or sickness; from evident and apparent danger of the mother, or from the interposition of the father's authority, or from plain necessity; or if there be any other that have an equal reason with these, I have prevented already by allowing them to be just and reasonable exceptions from the general rule, when they are real, and not made pretences to shake off our duty.

But there are besides these, two Objections which indeed are real, but yet seem to have too great a weight with those who would fain decline this duty, and are by no means sufficient to excuse mothers, no not those of the highest rank and quality, from the natural obligation of it. And they are these: the manifest trouble, and the manifold restraints which the careful discharge of this duty does unavoidably bring upon those who submit themselves to it.

1st, For the trouble of it, I have only this to say, and I think that no more need to be said about it; that no body is discharged from any duty by reason of the trouble which necessarily attends it, and is inseparable from it; since God who made it a duty foresaw the trouble of it when he made it so.

2dly, As to the manifold restraints which it lays upon mothers; this will best be answered by considering of what nature these restraints are. And they are chiefly in these and the like instances. This duty restrains mothers from spending their morning and their money in curious and costly dressing; from mispending the rest of the day in formal and for the most part impertinent visits, and in seeing and hearing plays, many of which are neither fit to be seen or heard by modest persons and those who pretend to religion and virtue; as I hope all christians do, especially persons of higher rank and quality: and it restrains them likewise from trifling away a great part of the night in gaming, and in revelling till past midnight, I am loth to say how much.

These are those terrible restraints which this natural duty, of mothers nursing their children, lays upon them.

them. Now I cannot but think all these to be very happy restraints : happy surely for the child ; and in many respects happy for the father, and for the whole family, which by this means will be kept in much better order : but happiest of all for the mother, who does herein not only discharge a great and necessary duty, but is hereby also hinder'd from running into many great faults, which before they will be forgiven must cost her a deep contrition, and a very bitter repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unusual argument, than will please the present age : but I hope posterity will be so wise as to consider it and lay it to heart. For I am greatly afraid that the world will never be much better till this great fault be mended. I proceed to the next particular wherein the good education of children doth consist, namely,

II. In bringing them to be baptized and admitted members of CHRIST's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members. I mean, to bring them to the church to be there publickly initiated, and solemnly admitted by baptism. And this the rules of the church of England do strictly enjoin, unless the child be in danger of death ; and in that case only it is allowed to administer baptism privately, and in a summary way without performing the whole office : but then if the child live, it is ordered that it shall be brought to the church, where the remainder of the office is to be solemnly performed.

I know that of late years, since our unhappy confusions, this sacrament hath very frequently been ad-

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ministred in private: and ministers have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater mischief of separation, necessitated to comply with the obstinacy of the greater and more powerful of their parishioners; who for their ease, or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous christening, will either have their children baptized at home by their minister; or if he refuse, will get some other minister to do it; which is very irregular.

Now I would intreat such persons calmly to consider how contrary to reason, and to the plain design of the institution of this sacrament, this perverse custom, and their obstinate resolution in it, is. For is there any civil society or corporation into which persons are admitted without some kind of solemnity? and is the privilege of being admitted members of the christian church, and heirs of the great and glorious promises and blessings of the new covenant of the gospel less considerable, and fit to be conferred with less solemnity? I speak to christians, and they who are so in good earnest will, without my using more words about it, consider what I say in this particular.

III. Another and very necessary part of the good education of children is, by degrees to inform and carefully to instruct them in the whole compass of their duty to God, their neighbour, and themselves: that so they may be taught how to behave themselves in all the steps of their life, from their first capacity of reason till they arrive at the more perfect use and exercise of that faculty; when, if at first they be well instructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themselves afterwards.

This

This duty GOD does expressly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar people, the people of Israel, speaking of the law which he had given them:

“Thou shalt, says he, teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” And this GOD long before promised, that Abraham, the father of the faithful, would do; “I know Abraham, says he, that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD.”

Deut. vi.
7.

Gen. xviii.
19.

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the first budding and appearance of reason and understanding in children. So the prophet directs; “Whom shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts: for precept must be upon precept, &c.

Isa. xxviii.
9, 10.

To this end we must, by such degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with GOD and themselves. And in the first place we must inform them, that there is such a being as GOD, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things. And then, that we are all his creatures, and the work of his hands, “that it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves:” that he continually preserves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy: and therefore we ought to ask every thing of him by prayer, because this is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him; and to return thanks to him for all that we have and hope for, because this is a just and easy tribute,

tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberless favours and benefits.

And after this, they are to be instructed more particularly in their duty to God and men, as I shall shew more fully afterwards. And because fear and hope are the two passions which do chiefly sway and govern humane nature, and the main springs and principles of action ; therefore children are to be carefully informed that there is a life after death, wherein men shall receive from God a mighty and eternal reward, or a terrible and endless punishment, according as they have done or neglected their duty in this life : that God will love and reward those who do his will and keep his commandments, but will execute a dreadful punishment upon the workers of iniquity and the wilful transgressors of his laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great degeneracy and corruption of humane nature, derived to us from the fall and wilful transgression of our first parents ; and of the way of our recovery out of this miserable estate by JESUS CHRIST ; whom God hath sent in our nature to purchase and accomplish the Redemption and Salvation of mankind, from the captivity of sin and satan, and from the damnation of hell.

IV. The good education of children consists not only in informing their minds in the knowledge of God and their duty, but more especially in endeavouring with the greatest care and prudence to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue. And this must be done by training them up to the exercise of the following graces and virtues.

First,

First, to obedience and modesty; to diligence and sincerity; and to tenderness and pity, as the general dispositions to religion and virtue.

Secondly, to the good government of their passions, and of their tongue; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate lying as a base and vile quality; these being as it were the foundations of religion and virtue.

Thirdly, to piety and devotion towards God; to sobriety and chastity with regard to themselves; and to justice and charity towards all men; as the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue.

First, as the general dispositions to religion and virtue, we must train them up,

1st, To obedience. Parents must take great care to maintain their authority over their children; otherwise they will neither regard their commands, nor hearken to and follow their instructions. If they once get head and grow stubborn and disobedient, there is very little hope of doing any great good upon them.

2dly, To modesty, which is a fear of shame and disgrace. This disposition, which is proper to children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purposes. "They are modest, says Aristotle, who are afraid to offend, and they are afraid to offend who are most apt to do it;" as children are, because they are very much under the power of their passions, without a proportionable strength of reason to govern them and keep them under.

Now modesty is not properly a virtue, but it is a very good sign of a tractable and towardly disposition, and a great preservative and security against

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sin and vice: and those children, who are much under the restraint of modesty, we look upon as most hopeful and likely to prove good; whereas immodesty is a vicious temper broke loose and got free from all restraint: so that there is nothing left to keep an impudent person from sin, when fear of shame is gone: for sin will soon take possession of that person whom shame hath left. He that is once become shameless hath prostituted himself. Therefore preserve this disposition in children as much as is possible, as one of the best means to preserve their innocency, and to bring them to goodness.

3dly, to diligence, *sive quâ vir magnus nunquam extitit*; "without which, says one, there never "was any great and excellent person." When the Roman historians describe an extraordinary man, this always enters into his character as an essential part of it, that he was *incredibili industriâ, diligentia singulari*, "of incredible industry, of singular diligence;" or something to that purpose. And indeed a person can neither be excellently good, nor extremely bad, without this quality. The devil himself could not be so bad and michievous as he is, if he were not so stirring and restless a spirit, and did not compass the earth, and "go to and "fro seeking whom he may devour."

This is part of the character of Sylla, and Marius, and Catiline, those great disturbers of the Roman state; as well as of Cesar and Pompey, who were much greater and better men, but yet gave trouble enough to their country, and at last dissolved the Roman commonwealth by their ambition and contention for superiority: This, I say, enters

into

into all their characters, that they were of a vigorous and indefatigable spirit. So that diligence in it self is neither a virtue nor a vice, but may be applied either way, to good or bad purposes; and yet where all other requisites do concur it is a very proper instrument and disposition for virtue.

Therefore train up children to diligence, if ever you desire they should excel in any kind. "The Prov. x. 4. diligent hand, saith Solomon, maketh rich;" rich in estate, rich in knowledge. "Seest thou a Prov. xxii. man diligent in his business? as the same wise man²⁹ observes, he shall stand before princes, he shall not stand before, mean or obscure men." And again, "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the Prov. xii. slothful shall be under tribute." Diligence puts²⁴ almost every thing into our power, and will in time make children capable of the best and greatest things.

Whereas idleness is the bane and ruin of children; it is the unbending of their spirits, the rust of their faculties, and as it were the laying of their minds fallow; not as husbandmen do their lands that they may get new heart and strength, but to impair and lose that which they have. Children that are bred up in laziness are almost necessarily bad, because they cannot take the pains to be good; and they cannot take pains, because they have never been inured and accustomed to it; which makes their spirits restive, and when you have occasion to quicken them and spur them up to business, they will stand stock still.

Therefore never let your children be without a calling, or without some useful, or at least innocent

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employment that will take them up; that they may not be put upon a kind of necessity of being vicious for want of something better to do. The devil tempts the active and vigorous into his service, knowing what fit and proper instruments they are to do his drudgery: but the slothful and idle, nobody having hired them and set them on work, lie in his way, and he stumbles upon them as he goes about; and they do as it were offer themselves to his service, and having nothing to do they even tempt the devil himself to tempt them, and to take them in his way.

4thly, To sincerity; which is not so properly a single virtue, as the life and soul of all other graces and virtues; and without which, what shew of goodness soever a man may make, he is unsound and rotten at the heart. Cherish therefore this disposition in children, as that which when they come to be men will be the great security and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and Men.

5thly, To tenderness and pity: which, when they come to engage in business and to have dealings in the world, will be a good bar against injustice and oppression; and will be continually prompting us to charity, and will fetch powerful arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preserve this goodness and tenderness of nature, this so very humane and useful affection, keep children, as much as possible, out of the way of bloody fights and spectacles of cruelty; and discountenance in them all cruel and barbarous usage of creatures under their power; do not allow them

to

to torture and kill them for their sport or pleasure ; because this will insensibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them less apt to compassionate the wants of the poor and the sufferings and afflictions of the miserable.

Secondly, as the main foundations of Religion and virtue, children must be carefully trained up to the government of their passions, and of their tongues ; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate lying as a base and vile quality.

1st, To the good government of their passions. It is the disorder of these, more especially of desire, and fear, and anger, which betrays us to many evils. Anger prompts men to contention and murder : inordinate desire, to covetousness and fraud and oppression : and fear many times awes men into sin, and deters them from their duty.

Now if these passions be cherished, or even but let alone in children, they will in a short time grow headstrong and unruly, and when they come to be men will corrupt the judgment, and turn good-nature into humour, and the understanding into prejudice, and wilfulness : but if they be carefully observed and prudently restrained, they may by degrees be managed and brought under government ; and the inordinacy of them being pruned away, they may prove excellent instruments of virtue.

Therefore be careful to discountenance in children any thing that looks like rage and furious anger, and to shew them the unreasonableness and deformity of it. Check their longing desires after things pleasant, and use them to frequent disappointments in that kind ; that when you think fit to gratify

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gratify them they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to submit to the more prudent choice of their parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you see them at any time apt out of fear to neglect their duty, or to fall into any sin, or to be tempted by telling a lye to commit one fault to hide and excuse another, which children are very apt to do; the best remedy of this evil will be to plant a greater fear against a less, and to tell them what and whom they should chiefly fear; "not him who can hurt and kill the body, but him who after he hath killed can destroy both body and soul in hell."

The neglect of children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their passions, is the true cause why many that have proved sincere christians when they came to be men, have yet been very imperfect in their conversation, and their lives been full of inequalities and breaches, which have not only been matter of great trouble and disquiet to themselves, but of great scandal to religion; when their light which should shine before men is so often darkened and obscured by these frequent and visible infirmities.

2dly, To the government of their tongues. To this end teach children silence, especially in the presence of their betters. And as soon as they are capable of such a lesson, let them be taught not to speak but upon consideration, both of what they say, and before whom. And above all, inculcate upon them
that

that most necessary duty and virtue of speaking SERM.
truth, as one of the best and strongest bands of hu- LI.
mane society and commerce : and possess them with
the baseness and vileness of telling a lye ; for if it be
so great a provocation to give a man the lye, then
surely to be guilty of that fault must be a mighty re-
proach.

They who write of Japan tell us that those People,
though mere heathens, take such an effectual course
in the education of their children, as to render a lye,
and breach of faith, above all things odious to them :
insomuch that it is a very rare thing for any person
among them to be taken in a lye, or found guilty of
breach of faith. And cannot the rules of christianity
be render'd as effectual to restrain men from these
faults which are scandalous even to nature, and much
more so to the christian religion ?

To the government of the tongue does likewise
belong the restraining of children from lewd and ob-
scene words, from vain and profane talk ; and espe-
cially from horrid oaths and imprecations : from all
which they are easily kept at first, but if they are
once accustomed to them, it will be found no such
easy matter for them to get quit of these evil habits.
It will require great attention and watchfulness over
themselves, to keep oaths out of their common dis-
course : but if they be heated and in passion, they
throw out oaths and curses as naturally as men that
are highly provoked sling stones, or any thing that
comes next to hand at one another : so dangerous a
thing is it to let any thing that is bad in children to
grow up into a habit.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, as the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue, let children be carefully bred up,

1st, To sobriety and temperance in regard to themselves; under which I comprehend likewise purity and chastity. The government of the sensual appetite as to all kind of bodily pleasures is not only a great part of religion, but an excellent instrument of it, and a necessary foundation of piety and justice. For he that cannot govern himself is not like to discharge his duty either to God or men. And therefore St. Paul puts sobriety first, as a primary and principal virtue in which men are instructed by the christian religion, and which must be laid as the foundation both of piety towards God, and of righteousness to men. "The grace of God, for so he calls the gospel, that brings salvation unto all men, hath appeared; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world." It first teacheth us to live soberly: and unless we train up children to this virtue, we must never expect that they will live righteously or godly in this present world.

Especially, children must be bred up to great sobriety and temperance in their diet, which will retrench the fuel of other inordinate appetites. It is a good saying I have met with somewhere, *Magna pars virtutis est bene moratus venter*, "a well-manner'd and well-govern'd appetite, in matter of meats and drinks, is a great part of virtue." I do not mean, that children should be brought up according to the rules of a Lessian diet, which sets an equal stint to all stomachs,

stomachs, and is as senseless a thing as a law would be which should injoin that shoes for all mankind should be made upon one and the same last. S E R M.
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2dly, To a serious and unaffected piety and devotion towards God, still and quiet, real and substantial, without much shew and noise; and as free, as may be, from all tricks of superstition, or freaks of enthusiasm; which, if parents and teachers be not very prudent, will almost unavoidably insinuate themselves into the religion of children; and when they are grown up will make them appear, to wise and sober persons, fantastical and conceited; and render them very apt to impose their own foolish superstitions and wild conceits upon others, who understand religion much better than themselves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things, to serve him in private, and to attend constantly upon his publick worship, and to keep their minds intent upon the several parts of it, without wandering and distraction: to pray to God as the fountain of all grace and “the giver of every good “and perfect gift:” and to acknowledge him, and to render thanks to him, as our most gracious and constant benefactor, and the great patron and preserver of our lives: to be careful to do what he commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: to be always under a lively sense and apprehension of his pure and all-seeing eye, which beholds us in secret: and to do every thing in obedience to the authority of that great “lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy;” and with an awful regard to the strict and impartial “judgment of the great day.”

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3dly, To justice and honesty : to defraud and oppress no man ; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their promises and contracts ; and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the equity of that great rule, which is so natural, and so easy, that even children are capable of it ; I mean that rule which our blessed SAVIOUR tells us, “ is the law and the “ prophets,” namely, that we should do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their case and circumstances, and they in ours.

You that are parents and have to do in the world, ought to be just and equal in all your dealings. In the first place for the sake of your own souls, and next for the sake of your children ; not only that you may entail no curse upon the estate you leave them, but likewise that you may teach them no injustice by the example you set before them ; which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing ; because of the present worldly advantage which it seems to bring, and because justice is in truth a manly virtue and least understood by children ; and therefore injustice is a vice which they will soonest practise and with the least reluctance, because they have the least knowledge of it in many particular cases : and because they have so little sense of this great virtue, they should not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and sport, even when they play for little or nothing : for if they practise it in that case, and be unjust in a little, they will be much more tempted to be so when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember that Xenophon in his institution of Cyrus, which he designed for the idea of a well-educated prince, tells us this little but very instructive story

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story concerning young Cyrus : that his governor, the better to make him to understand the nature of justice, puts this case to him : you see there, says he to Cyrus, two boys playing, of different stature ; the lesser of them hath a very long coat, and the bigger a very short one : now, says he, if you were a judge how would you dispose of these two garments ? Cyrus immediately, and with very good reason as he thought, passeth this sudden sentence, that the taller boy should have the longer garment, and he that was of lower stature the shorter, because this certainly was fittest for them both : upon which his governor sharply rebukes him to this purpose ; telling him, that if he were to make two coats for them he said well ; but he did not put this case to him as a tailor but as a judge, and as such he had given a very wrong sentence : for a judge, says he, ought not to consider what is most fit, but what is just ; not who could make the best use of a thing, but who hath the most right to it.

This I bring partly to shew in what familiar ways the principles of virtue may be instilled into children ; but chiefly to prove that justice is a manly virtue, and that there is nothing wherein children may be more easily misled, than in matter of right and wrong : therefore children should be taught the general principles and rules of justice and righteousness, because if we would teach them to do justice we must teach them to know what justice is. For many are unjust merely out of ignorance and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

4thly, To charity ; I mean chiefly to the poor and destitute ; because this, as it is an essential so it

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is a most substantial part of religion. Now to encourage this disposition in children we must not only give them the example of it, but must frequently inculcate upon them such passages of scripture as these, “ that pure religion and undefiled before GOD and the FATHER is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction :” “ that as we sow in this kind, so we shall reap :” that “ he shall have judgment without mercy who hath shewed no mercy :” that at the judgment of the great day we shall in a very particular manner be called to an account for the practice or omission of this duty, and shall then be absolved or condemned according as we have exercised or neglected this great virtue of the christian religion.

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Of the education of children.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

V. **T**HE good education of children consists in giving them good example. This course David took in his family, as appears by that solemn resolution of his, “ I will be-
Psal. ci. 2. have myself wisely in a perfect way, I will walk
“ within my house with a perfect heart.” Let parents

rents and masters of families give good example to their children and servants, in a constant serving of God in their families, which will nourish religion in those that are under their care: and let them also be exemplary in a sober and holy conversation before those that belong to them. S E R M.
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And let not your children, as far as is possible, have any bad examples to converse with, either among your servants, or their own companions; lest "by walking with them they learn their way" and get a blot to their souls." There is contagion in example, and nothing doth more slyly insinuate itself and gain upon us than a living and familiar pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let children always have good examples before them.

Especially, let parents themselves be exemplary to them in the best things, because their example is of all other the most powerful, and carries greatest authority with it. And without this, instruction will signify very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be lost. We shall find it very hard to persuade our children to do that which they see we do not practise ourselves. For even children have so much sense and sagacity as to understand that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inwardly believe. Example is the most lively way of teaching, and because children are much given to imitation, it is likewise a very delightful way of instruction, and that of which children are most capable; both because it is best understood, and apt to make the deepest impression upon them.

So that parents, above all others, have one argument to be religious and good themselves, for the sake of their children. If you desire to have them good, the best way to make them so is to give them the example of it in being good yourselves. For this reason parents should take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your children will follow you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil example of parents is both a temptation and encouragement to children to sin, because it is a kind of authority for what they do, and looks like a justification of their wickedness.

With what reason canst thou expect that thy children should follow thy good instructions, when thou thyself givest them an ill example? thou dost but as it were beckon to them with thy head, and shew them the way to heaven by thy good counsel, but thou takest them by the hand and ledest them in the way to hell by thy contrary example. Whenever you swear or tell a lye, or are passionate and furious, or come drunk into your family, you weaken the authority of your commands, and lose all reverence and obedience to them by contradicting your own precepts.

The precepts of a good man are apt to raise and inflame others to the imitation of them, but when they come from one who is faulty and vicious in that kind himself, they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exercise of those virtues, which we plainly see they do not practise themselves. It is the apostle's argument,

“Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou
“not

"not thyself?" Thou that teachest thy children to speak truth, dost thou tell a lye? Thou that sayest they must not swear, dost thou profane the name of God by customary oaths and curses? Thou art unfit to be "a guide of the blind, a light to them that sit in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes; because thou thyself hast only a form of knowledge and of truth in the law," but art destitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good example to your children, you defeat your own counsels and undermine the best instructions you can give them; and they will all be spilt like water upon the barren sands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good education consists in wise and early restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable reproof and correction. And this also is one way of instruction: so Solomon tells us, "The rod and reproof giveth wisdom:" And though both these do suppose a fault that is past, yet the great end of them is to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore whatever will probably be effectual for future caution and amendment, ought to be sufficient in this kind, because the end is always to give measure to the means: And where a mild and gentle rebuke will do the business, reproof may stop there without proceeding farther; or when that will not do, if a sharp word and a severe admonition will be effectual, the rod may be spared.

Provided always, that your lenity give no encouragement to sin, and be so managed that children

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may perceive that you are in good earnest, and resolved that if they will not reform they shall certainly be punished. And provided likewise, that your lenity bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the fault. We must not use mildness in the case of a wilful and heinous sin, especially if it be exemplary and of publick influence. To rebuke gently upon such an occasion is rather to countenance the fault, and seems to argue that we are not sensible enough of the enormity of it, and that we have not a due dislike and detestation for it: such cold reproofs as those which old Eli gave his sons, “Why do you such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people,” that is, their carriage was such as gave publick scandal: “Nay, my Sons; for it is not a good report that I hear, you make the LORD’s people to transgress.”

1 Sam. ii.
23, 24.

Such a cold reproof as this, where the crime was so great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their sin; and so God interprets it, and therefore calls it “a kicking at his sacrifice, and a despising of his offering:” And he threatens Eli with most terrible judgments upon this very account, “because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

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So that our Severity must be proportioned to the crime. Where the fault is great, there greater severity must be used; so much at least as may be an effectual restraint for the future. Here was Eli’s miscarriage, that in the case of so great a fault as his Sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the crime, nor to the end of reproof

proof and correction, which is amendment for the future : but he used such a mildness in his reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage than restrain them in their vile courses: for so the text says, “ that his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”

There are indeed some dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentile reproof will suffice. But most children are of that temper that correction must be sometimes used, and a fond indulgence in this case is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and in truth not love but hatred. So the wise man ^{Prov. xiii.} tells, “ He that spareth the rod hateth his son,^{24.}” “ but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. “ Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not ^{Ch. xix.} thy soul spare for his crying.” And again, ^{18.} “ Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child,^{15.}” “ and the rod of correction shall drive it far from ^{Ch. xxiii.} him. Withhold not correction from the child,^{13, 14.}” “ for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not ^{Ch. xxix.} die: Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt ^{15.} deliver his soul from hell.” Again, “ The rod “ and reproof giveth wisdom, but a child left to ^{15.} himself bringeth his mother to shame:” He mentions the mother emphatically, because she many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon her.

So that correction is of great use, and often necessary; and parents that forbear it, are not only cruel to their children, but to themselves: for God many times punishes those parents very severely who have neglected this necessary piece of discipline.

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There is hardly to be found in the whole bible a more terrible temporal threatning than that concerning Eli and his house, for his fond indulgence to his sons, who when they came to be men proved such horrible scandals not only to their father, but to the priest's office; and to that degree as "to make the sacrifices of the LORD to be abhorred by all the people." I will recite the threatning at large, for an admonition to parents that they be not guilty in this kind. "The LORD said to Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle: In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not: And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever." I know very well that this enormous wickedness of Eli's sons was committed by them after they were grown to be men, but this instance is nevertheless to my present purpose, there being hardly any doubt to be made but that it was the natural effect of a remiss and too indulgent an education.

1 Sam. iii.
11, 12, 13,
14.

Yea very often God doth correct and remarkably punish fond parents by those very children who have wanted due reproof and correction: Of which the scripture gives us a remarkable instance in Adonijah, upon the mention of whose rebellion against David

David his father, the text takes particular notice of his father's extreme fondness of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cause of it; "For his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, why hast thou done so?" And on the contrary, the wise son of Sirach tells us, "that he that chastiseth his son shall have joy of him."

VII. The next thing I shall mention as a part of good education is, the bringing of children to be publickly catechized by the minister, to prepare them for solemn confirmation.

It was with a particular respect to this work of publick catechizing, and by way of introduction to it, that I at first proposed to treat thus largely of the good education of children, hoping it might be of good use to handle this subject more fully than it hath usually been done, at least to my knowledge, from the pulpit.

And therefore I shall say something, and that very briefly, concerning the nature, and concerning the necessity and great usefulness of catechizing children.

First, for the nature of it, it is a particular way of teaching by question and answer, accommodated and fitted for the instruction of children in the principles of religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where enjoined in scripture; but instruction in general is: and I doubt not but that upon this general warrant parents and ministers may use that way of instruction of children which is most fit and proper to instil into them the principles of religion. It is true that the word *κατηχέειν*, from whence our word catechism doth

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come, is used in scripture to signify teaching in general: but it hath since by ecclesiastical writers been appropriated to that particular way of instruction which hath been long in use in the christian church, and is commonly called catechizing.

Secondly, as to the necessity and great usefulness of it; catechizing hath a particular advantage as to children: because they are subject to forgetfulness and want of attention. Now catechizing is a good remedy against both these; because by questions put to them children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and must give some answer to the question that is asked: and a catechism being short, and containing in a little compass the most necessary principles of religion, it is the more easily remembered.

The great usefulness and indeed the necessity of it plainly appears by experience. For it very seldom happens, that children which have not been catechized have any clear and competent knowledge of the principles of religion; and for want of this are incapable of receiving any great benefit by sermons, which suppose persons to be in some measure instructed before-hand in the main principles of religion.

Besides, that if they have no principles of religion fixed in them, they become an easy prey to seducers. And we have had sad experience of this in our age; and among many other dismal effects of our late civil confusions this is none of the least, that publick catechizing was almost wholly disused, and private too in most families: for had catechizing of children been continued, it is very probable that this age would have been infested with fewer errors and with fewer schisms; and that there would not have been so much

much apostasy from the fundamentals of religion. For it is, I think, a true observation, that catechizing, and the history of the martyrs have been the two great pillars of the protestant religion.

There being then so great a necessity and usefulness of this way of instruction, I would earnestly recommend the practice of it to parents and masters of families with respect to their children and servants. For I do not think that this work should lie wholly upon ministers. You must do your part at home, who by your constant residence in your families have better and more easy opportunities of inculcating the principles of religion upon your children and servants. There you must prepare them for publick catechizing, that the work of the minister may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns ministers, I intend by God's assistance, so soon as the business can be put into a good method, to begin this exercise. And I do earnestly intreat all that have young children and servants, to bring such of them as are fit to be publickly catechized and instructed in the principles of religion: and I shall as often as shall be thought expedient spend some time in this work, between afternoon prayers and sermon.

The catechism to be used shall be that appointed in our liturgy, which is short, and contains in it the chief principles of the christian religion. And I shall make a short and plain explication of the heads of it; suitable to the capacity of children. And because this may not probably be of so great advantage to those who are of riper years and understandings, yet because children are to be instructed as well

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well as men, I must intreat those who are like to carry away the least profit, to bring with them the more patience: especially since I shall for their sakes, in the constant course of my afternoon's sermons, more largely and fully explain the chief principles of the christian belief: a work which you know I have some time ago entred upon.

VIII. The last thing I shall mention, and with which the state of childhood ends, is bringing of children to the bishop, to be solemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the vow which by their sureties they entred into at their baptism.

This is acknowledged by almost all sects and parties of christians to be of primitive antiquity, and of very great use when it is performed with that due preparation of persons for it, by the ministers to whose charge they belong, and with that seriousness and solemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very desirable that confirmations should be more frequent, and in smaller numbers at a time; that so the bishop may apply himself more particularly to every person that is to be confirmed, that by this means the thing may make the deeper impression, and lay the stronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wish, both to prevent confusion, and for the ease also of the bishop, that his work may not be endless, that ministers would take care that none may present themselves to the bishop, or be presented by the ministers, to be confirmed a second time: because a great many are wont to offer themselves every time there is a confirmation, which
is

is both very disorderly and unreasonable, there being every whit as little reason for a second confirmation, as there is for a second baptism: and if any persons need so often to be confirmed, it is a sign that confirmation hath very little effect upon them.

II. I proceed to the second general head, which was to give some more particular directions for the management of this work of the good education of children in such a way as may be most effectual to its end.

First, endeavour, as well as you can, to discover the particular temper and disposition of children, that you may suit and apply yourselves to it, and by striking in with nature may steer and govern them in the sweetest and easiest way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which husbandmen are wont very carefully to enquire into, that they may apply the seed to the soil, and plant in it that which is most proper for it:

Quid quæque ferat regio, quid quæque recuset.

Hic segetes, illic veniunt felicius uvæ.

Every soil is not proper for all sorts of grain or fruit; one ground is fit for corn, another for vines. And so it is in the tempers and dispositions of children: some are more capable of one excellency and virtue than another, and some more strongly inclined to one vice than another: which is a great secret of nature and providence, and it is very hard to give a just and satisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular tempers of children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them, and manage them to the best advantage: that

SRRM. that where we discern in them any forward inclina-
 LII. tions to good, we may cast in such seeds and principles, as, by their suitableness to their particular tempers, we judge most likely to take soonest and deepest root : and when these are grown up, and have taken possession of the soil, they will prepare it for the seeds of other virtues.

And so likewise when we discover in their nature a more particular disposition and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we must with great diligence and care apply such instructions, and plant such principles in them, as may be most effectual to alter this evil disposition of their minds ; that whilst nature is tender and flexible we may gently bend it the other way : and it is almost incredible what strange things by prudence and patience may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverse and crooked disposition.

So that it is of very great use to observe and discover the particular tempers of children, that in all our instruction and management of them we may apply ourselves to their nature and hit their peculiar disposition : by this means we may lead and draw them to their duty in humane ways, and such as are much more agreeable to their temper than constraint and necessity, which are harsh and churlish, and against the grain. Whatever is done with delight goes on cheerfully, but when nature is compelled and forced, things proceed heavily : therefore, when we are forming and fashioning children to religion and virtue, we should make all the advantage we can of their particular tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct nature

ture in the way it will most easily go. Every temper gives some particular advantage and handle where-
by we may take hold of them and steer them more easily : but if we take a contrary course we must expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctance.

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Such ways of education as are prudently fitted to the particular dispositions of children are like wind and tide together, which will make the work go on amain : but those ways and methods which are applied cross to nature are like wind against tide, which make a great stir and conflict, but a very slow progress. Not that I do, or can expect that all parents should be philosophers, but that they should use the best wisdom they have in a matter of so great concernment.

Secondly, in your instruction of children endeavour to plant in them those principles of religion and virtue which are most substantial, and are like to have the best influence upon the future government of their lives, and to be of continual and lasting use to them. Look to the seed you sow, that it be sound and good, and for the benefit and use of mankind : this is to be regarded, as well as the ground into which the seed is cast.

Labour to beget in children a right apprehension of those things which are most fundamental and necessary to the knowledge of God and our duty ; and to make them sensible of the great evil and danger of sin ; and to work in them a firm belief of the next life, and of the eternal rewards and recompences of it. And if these principles once take root they will spread far and wide, and have a vast

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 LII. powerful lust, or temptation to vice hurry them
 away, they will probably accompany them and stick
 by them as long as they live.

Many parents, according to their best knowledge and apprehensions of religion in which they themselves have been educated, and too often according to their zeal without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill-grounded opinions in the minds of their children, and so fashion them to a party by infusing into them the particular notions and phrases of a sect, which when they come to be examined have no substance, nor perhaps sense in them: And by this means, instead of bringing them up in the true and solid principles of christianity, they take a great deal of pains to instruct them in some doubtful doctrines of no great moment in religion, and perhaps false at the bottom; whereby instead of teaching them to hate sin, they fix them in schism, and teach them to hate and damn all those who differ from them and are opposite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better christians than themselves.

And indeed nothing is more common and more to be pitied, than to see with what a confident contempt and scornful pity some ill-instructed and ignorant people will lament the blindness and ignorance of those who have a thousand times more true knowledge and skill than themselves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice as well as knowledge of the christian religion: believing those who do not relish their affected phrases and uncouth forms of speech to be ignorant of the mystery of the

the gospel, and utter strangers to the life and power of godliness. SERM.
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But now what is the effect of this mistaken way of education? The harvest is just answerable to the husbandry,

Infelix lolium & steriles dominantur avenæ;

As they have sown, so they must expect to reap; and instead of good grain to have cockle and tares: "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind," as the expression is in the prophet; instead of true religion, and of a sober and peaceable conversation, there will come up new and wild opinions, a factious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal, which will neither suffer themselves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you desire to reap the effects of true piety and religion, you must take care to plant in children the main and substantial principles of christianity, which may give them a general bias to holiness and goodness, and not to little particular opinions, which being once fixed in them by the strong prejudice of education will hardly ever be rooted out.

Thirdly, do all that in you lies to check and discourage in them the first beginnings of sin and vice: so soon as ever they appear pluck them up by the roots. This is like the weeding of corn, which is a necessary piece of good husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the soil it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: but if we watch them and cut them up as soon as they

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they appear, this will discourage the root and make it die.

Therefore take great heed that your children be not habituated and accustomed to any evil course. A vice that is of any considerable growth and continuance will soon grow obstinate, and having once spread its root, it will be a very difficult matter to clear the ground of it. A child may be so long neglected till he be overgrown with vice to that degree, that it may be out of the power of parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved disposition of children, it will be one of the hardest things in the world to give a stop to it. It is the Apostle's caution "to take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin," which they who go on in an evil course will most certainly be. We should observe the first appearances of evil in children, and kill those young serpents as soon as they stir lest they bite them to death.

Fourthly, bring them, as soon as they are capable of it, to the publick worship of God, where he hath promised his more especial presence and blessing. It is in Zion, the place of God's publick worship, where "the LORD hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore:" There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of grace in us: This is the pool where the angel useth to come and to move the waters: bring your children hither, where if they diligently attend they may meet with an opportunity of being healed.

And

And when they come from the church, call them frequently to an account of what they have heard and learned there: this will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their memories with greater care, and will fix it there so as to make a deeper and more lasting impression upon their minds.

Fifthly, be careful more especially to put them upon the exercise and practice of religion and virtue, in such instances as their understanding and age are capable of. Teach them some short and proper forms of prayer to God, to be said by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at least every morning and evening. A great many children neglect this, not from any ill disposition of mind, but because no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and custom of any thing will after a little while make that easy and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctance.

Knowledge and practice do mutually promote and help forward one another. Knowledge prepares and disposeth for practice, and practice is the best way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere speculation is a very raw and rude thing in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. The most exact skill in geography is nothing compared with the knowledge of that man, who besides the speculative part hath travelled over and carefully viewed the Countries he hath read of. The most knowing man in the art and rules of navigation is no body in comparison

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parison of an experienced pilate and seaman. Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere speculation, as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may easily mistake rules, but frequent practice and experience are seldom deceived. Give me a man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me that he knows how to do it. That saying of our blessed SAVIOUR, "If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of my self," is a clear determination of this matter, namely, that they understand the will of GOD best who are most careful to do it. And so likewise the best way to know what GOD is, is to transcribe his perfections in our lives and actions; to be holy, and just, and good, and merciful as he is.

Therefore when the minds of children are once thoroughly possess'd with the true principles of religion, we should bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know: let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to avoid what is evil, in all its shapes and appearances, and to practise their duty in the several instances of it, than "to speak with the tongues

Job xxviii. 28. "of men and angels:" "Unto man he said, behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom, and
1 Joh. ii. 3, 4. "to depart from evil is understanding." "Hereby, saith St. John, we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments: he that saith I know him and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

Xenophon tells us, that the Persians instead of making their children learned taught them to be virtuous; and instead of filling their heads with fine speculations, taught them honesty, and sincerity, and resolution; and endeavoured to make them wise and valiant, just and temperate. Lycurgus also in the institution of the Lacedemonian commonwealth took no care about learning, but only about the lives and manners of their children: though I should think that the care of both is best, and that learning would very much help to form the manners of children, and to make them both wiser and better men: and therefore with the leave of so great and wise a lawgiver, I cannot but think that this was a defect in his institution: because learning, if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness, is not only an ornament but a great advantage to the better government of any kingdom or commonwealth.

Sixthly, there must be great care and diligence used in this whole business of education, and more particularly in the instruction of children. There must be "line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," as the prophet expresseth it. The principles of religion and virtue must be instilled and dropt into them by such degrees and in such a measure as they are capable of receiving them: for children are narrow-mouth'd vessels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they must also be accustomed to the practice and exercise of religion and goodness by degrees, till holiness and virtue have taken root, and they

they be well settled and confirmed in a good course. Now this requires constant attendance and even the patience of the husbandman to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In some children the seeds that are sown fall into a greater depth of earth, and therefore are of a slow disclosure, and it may be a considerable time before they appear above-ground; it is long before they shoot and grow up to any height, and yet they may afterwards be very considerable:

Sir H. W. "which, as an ingenious author observes, should
"excite the care and prevent the despair of pa-
"rents: for if their children be not such speedy
"spreaders and branchers as the vine, they may
"perhaps prove

—*proles tardè crescentis olivæ.*"

It is a work of great pains and difficulty to rectify a perverse disposition. It is more easy to palliate the corruption of nature, but the cure of it requires time and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be covered and concealed, but it is a great work to conquer and subdue it. It must first be check'd and stopp'd in its course, and then weaken'd and the force of it be broken by degrees, and at last, if it be possible, destroyed and rooted out.

Seventhly and lastly, to all these means we must add our constant and earnest prayers to God for our children, that his grace may take an early possession of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations and towardly dispositions for goodness: and that he would be pleased to accompany all our endea-

endeavours to that end with his powerful assistance^{S E R M.} and blessing; without which, all that we can do will ^{LII.} prove ineffectual. Parents may plant, and ministers may water, but it is God that must give the increase.

Be often then upon your knees for your children. Do not only teach them to pray for themselves, but do you likewise with great fervour and earnestness "commend them to God and to the power of his grace," which alone is able to sanctify them. Apply yourselves to "the father of lights; from whom comes every good and perfect gift:" beg his HOLY SPIRIT, and ask divine knowledge and wisdom for them of him, "who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth no man:" beseech him to season their tender years with his fear, which is the beginning of wisdom: pray for them as Abraham did for Ishmael, "O that Ishmael may live in thy fight."

Many parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themselves to prayer, earnest and importunate prayer to God, as their last refuge. Monica, the mother of St. Austin, by the constancy and importunity of her prayers obtained of God the conversion of her son, who proved afterwards so great and glorious an instrument of good to the church of God: according to what St. Ambrose bishop of Milan, to encourage her to persevere in her fervent prayers for her son, had said to her, *Fieri non potest ut filius tot lacrymarum pereat*: "It cannot be, says he, that a son of so many prayers and tears should miscarry." God's grace is free, but it is not un-

likely but that God will at last give in this blessing to our earnest prayers and faithful endeavours.

Therefore pray for them "without ceasing, pray "and faint not." Great importunity in prayer seldom fails of a gracious answer: our blessed SAVIOUR spake two parables on purpose to encourage us herein: not because God is moved, much less because he is tired out with our importunity; but because it is an argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great goodness: "and "to them that believe all things are possible, says "our blessed LORD:" To whom, &c.

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Of the education of children.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

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I Proceed to the next general head which I proposed, namely,

III. To discover some of the more remarkable and common miscarriages in the management of this work. I do not hereby mean gross neglects for want of care, but mistakes and miscarriages for want of prudence and skill, even when there is no want of care and diligence in parents and instructors. And

I shall for method's sake reduce the more considerable and common miscarriages to these three heads.

First, in matter of instruction.

Secondly, in matter of example.

Thirdly, in matter of reproof and correction.

I. In matter of instruction. Parents do very often mainly miscarry in not teaching their children the true difference between good and evil, and the degrees of them; as when we teach them any thing is a sin that really is not, or that any thing is not a sin which in truth is so: or when we teach them to lay more stress and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only convenient to be in the highest degree necessary, or that which it may be is only inconvenient, or may be an occasion of scandal to some weak christians, to be a sin in its own nature damnable.

Parents do likewise lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to instruct them in lesser things, and as strict in injoining them, and as severe in punishing the commission or neglect of them, according as they esteem them good or evil, as if they were the weightier things of the law, and matters of the greatest moment in religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning parents that have with great severity restrained their children in the wearing of their hair: nay I can remember since the wearing of it below their ears was looked upon as a sin of the first magnitude; and when ministers generally, whatever their text was, did in every sermon either find or make an occasion with great severity to reprove the great sin of long hair; and if they saw any one in the

congregation guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewise known some parents that have strictly forbidden their children the use of some sorts of recreations and games under the notion of heinous sins, upon a mistake, that because there was in them a mixture of fortune and skill they were therefore unlawful; a reason which I think hath no weight and force in it, though I do not deny but humane laws may for very prudent reasons either restrain or forbid the use of these games, because of the boundless expence both of money and time which is many times occasioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps the same persons, that would not only allow but even encourage their children to despise the very service of God under some forms, which according to their several apprehensions they esteemed to be superstitious or factious. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of most dangerous consequence, and have often observed it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all religion.

And how many parents teach their children doubtful opinions, and lay great stress upon them as if they were saving or damning points; and hereby set such an edge and keenness upon them for or against some indifferent modes and circumstances of God's worship as if the very being of a church and the essence of religion were concerned in them?

These certainly are great mistakes, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of so wide and vast a difference

as good and evil, lawful and unlawful, indifferent and necessary. For when children come to be men, and to have a freer and larger view of the world, and shall find by the contrary practice of very wise and serious persons that they have quite different apprehensions of these matters, and do not think that to be a sin which their parents have so strictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times punished them more severely for the doing of it than if they had told a lye, this may make them apt to question whether any thing be a sin : and the violences which they offer to their consciences, and the strain that they give them upon such an occasion, by complying with the general practice of others contrary to the principles of their education, doth many times open a gap for great and real sins.

Besides, that children which are bred up in high prejudices for or against indifferent opinions or practices in religion, do usually when they are grown up prove to be men of narrow and contracted spirits, peevish and froward and uncharitable, and many times great bigots and zealots either in the ways of superstition or faction, according to the principles which have been instilled into them to bias them either way. And very hardly do they ever quit themselves so clearly of their prejudices, as to become wise and peaceable and substantial Christians.

In short, if we carefully observe it, we shall find that when children have been thus indiscreetly educated, their religion differs as much from that of sober and judicious christians as the civil behaviour and conversation of those who have been unskillfully and con-

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conceitedly taught how to carry themselves, does from the behaviour of those who have had a more free and generous education.

II. In matter of example. There are many parents whose lives are exemplary in the main, who yet seem to use too great a freedom before their children. It is an old rule, and I think a very good one :

Maxima debetur pueris reverentia.

“ There is a very great reverence due to children.” There are many things which are not sins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all persons. There are some words and actions so trivial and light, that they are not fit to be said or done before those for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of conversation which is only proper among equals in age and quality, which if we use before our superiors and betters, we seem to condemn them; if before our inferiors, they will go nigh to condemn us.

It ought to be considered, that children do not understand the exact limits of good and evil, so that if in our words or actions we go to the utmost bounds of that which is lawful, we shall be in danger of shewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their steps, and therefore we will not venture them to play about a precipice, or near a dangerous place, where yet men that will take care may go safely enough. And therefore parents should be very careful to keep their children from the confines of evil, and at as great a distance from

from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions should be ever tempered with gravity and circumspection, that children may not see or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to sin, or carry them to the borders of vice; lest they should not stop just there, but take a step further than you intended they should go.

III. In matter of reproof and correction: many religious and careful parents are guilty of two great miscarriages in this part of education.

First, Of too much rigor and severity; which, especially with some sort of tempers, hath very ill success. The first experiment that should be made upon children should be to allure them to their duty, and by reasonable inducements to gain them to the love of goodness; by praise and reward, and sometimes by shame and disgrace: and if this will do, there will be no occasion to proceed to severity; especially not to great severities, which are very unsuitable to humane nature. A mixture of prudent and seasonable reproof or correction when there is occasion for it, may do very well; but whips are not the cords of a man: humane nature may be driven by them, but it must be led by sweeter and gentler ways.

Speusippus caused the pictures of joy and gladness to be set round about his school, to signify that the business of education ought to be rendered as pleasant as may be: and indeed children stand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to learning and goodness. *Metus haud diuturni magister officii*, says Tully; "Fear alone will not teach a man his duty and hold him to it for a long time:" For when that is removed, nature will break

break loose and do like it self: besides, that frequent corrections make punishments to lose their awe and force, and are apt to spoil the disposition of children, and to harden them against shame: and after a while they will despise correction, when they find they can endure it.

Great severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended. And many times those who were bred up in a very severe school, hate learning ever after for the sake of the cruelty that was used to force it upon them: and so likewise an endeavour to bring children to piety and goodness by unreasonable strictness and rigor does often beget in them a lasting disgust and prejudice against religion, and teaches them, as *Erasmus* says, *virtutem simul odisse & nosse*, “to hate virtue at the same time that they teach them to know it:” for by this means virtue is represented to the minds of children under a great disadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together: so that whenever they think of religion and virtue, they remember the severity which was wont to accompany the instructions about it; and the natural hatred which men have for punishment is by this means derived upon religion it self. And indeed how can it be expected that children should love their duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of rods shak’d over them?

I insist upon this the more, because I do not remember to have observed more notorious instances of great miscarriage, than in the children of very strict and severe parents; of which I can give no other account but this, that nature when it is thus

over-

overcharged recoils the more terribly : it hath something in it like the spring of an engine, which being forcibly press'd does upon the first liberty return back with so much the greater violence. In like manner the vicious dispositions of children, when restrained merely by the severity of parents, do break forth strangely as soon as ever they get loose and from under their discipline.

Secondly, another miscarriage in this matter is when reproof and correction are accompanied and managed with passion. This is to betray one fault, and perhaps a greater in the punishment of another. Besides, that this makes reproof and correction to look like revenge and hatred, which usually does not persuade and reform but provoke and exasperate. And this probably may be one reason of the apostle's admonition, " parents provoke not your ^{Heb. x.} children unto wrath," because that is never likely ^{12.} to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of physick, which ought never to be administered in passion, but upon counsel and good advice.

And that passion is incident to parents upon this occasion, the apostle tells us when he says, " that ^{Heb. x.} the parents of our flesh chasten us for their pleasure," that is, they do it many times to gratify their passion ; but God chastens us for our profit, not in anger but with a design to do us good ; and can we have a better pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate ?

A father is as it were a prince and a judge in his family : there he gives laws, and inflicts censures and punishments upon offenders. But how misbe-

SER M. coming a thing would it be to see a judge pass
 LIII. sentence upon a man in choler? It is the same
 thing to see a father in the heat and fury of his
 passion correct his child. If a father could but see
 himself in this mood, and how ill his passion be-
 comes him, instead of being angry with his child
 he would be out of patience with himself. I proceed
 to the next thing I proposed, namely,

IV. To make out the truth of of the proposition
 contained in the text, by shewing how the good edu-
 cation of children comes to be of so great advantage,
 and to have so good and lasting an influence upon
 their whole lives.

I confess there are some wild and savage natures,
 monstrous and prodigious tempers, hard as the rocks,
 and barren as the sand upon the sea-shore; which dis-
 cover strong and early propensions to vice, and a
 violent antipathy to goodness. Such tempers are next
 to desperate, but yet they are not utterly intractable
 to the grace of God and the religious care of Pa-
 rents.

I hope such tempers as these are very rare, though
 God is pleased they should sometimes appear in the
 world, as instances of the great corruption and de-
 generacy of humane nature, and of the great need of
 divine grace. But surely there is no temper that is
 absolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced against that
 which is good. This would be so terrible an objec-
 tion against the providence of God as would be very
 hard to be answered. God be thanked, most tempers
 are tractable to good education, and there is very great
 probability of the good success of it, if it be care-
 fully and wisely managed,

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And for the confirmation of this truth I shall instance in two very great advantages of a religious and virtuous education of children.

1st, It gives religion and virtue the advantage of the first possession.

2dly, The advantage of habit and custom.

First, good education gives religion and virtue the advantage of the first possession. The mind of man is an active principle, and will be employed about something or other. It cannot stand idle, and will therefore take up with that which first offers itself. So soon as reason puts forth itself, and the understanding begins to be exercised, the mind of man discovers a natural thirst after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes first. If it have not the waters of life and the pure streams of goodness to allay that thirst, it will seek to quench it in the filthy puddles and impure pleasures of this world.

Now since children will be busying their minds about something, it is good that they should be entertained with the best things and with the best notions and principles of which their understanding and age are capable. It is a happy thing to be principled, and, as I may say, prejudiced the better way, and that religion should get the first possession of their hearts. For it is certainly a great advantage to religion to be planted in a tender and fresh soil. And if parents be careless, and neglect this advantage, the enemy will be sure to sow his tares while the husbandman is asleep.

Therefore we should prevent the devil by giving God and goodness an early possession of our children, and by letting him into their hearts betimes. Possession is a great point, and it is of mighty consequence

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sequence to have nature planted with good seeds before vicious inclinations spring up and grow into strength and habit.

I know that there is a spiteful proverb current in the world, and the devil hath taken care to spread it to the discouragement of an early piety, "A young faint and an old devil;" but notwithstanding this, a young faint is most likely to prove an old one. Solomon to be sure was of this mind, and I make no doubt but he made as wise and true proverbs as any body hath done since; him only excepted who was a much greater and wiser man than Solomon.

Secondly, good education gives likewise the advantage of habit and custom; and custom is of mighty force. It is, as *Pliny* in one of his *Epistles* says of it, *efficacissimus omnium rerum magister*, "the most powerful and effectual master in every kind." It is an acquired and a sort of second nature, and next to nature itself a principle of greatest power. Custom bears a huge sway in all humane actions. Men love those things and do them with ease to which they have been long inured and accustomed. And on the contrary men go against custom with great regret and uneasiness.

And among all others, that custom is most strong which is begun in childhood: and we see in experience the strange power of education in forming persons to religion and virtue. Now education is nothing but certain customs planted in childhood, and which have taken deep root whilst nature was tender.

We see likewise in common experience how dangerous an evil habit and custom is, and how hard to be alter'd. Therefore the Cretians, when they would curse a man to purpose, wished that the gods would engage him in some bad custom, looking upon a man after that to be irrecoverably lost. So on the other side, to be engaged in a good custom is an unspeakable advantage; especially for children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous course, before the habits of sin and vice have taken root and are confirmed in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: but yet this ought not to discourage us, because it is certain in experience that a contrary custom hath done much in many cases, even where nature hath been strongly inclined the other way. Demosthenes did by great resolution and almost infinite pains, and after a long habit, alter the natural imperfection of his speech, and even in despite of nature became the most eloquent man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a demonstration, for what hath been done may be done.

So that it is not universally true which Aristotle says, "that nature cannot be altered." It is true indeed in the instance which he gives of throwing a stone upward; you cannot, says he, by any custom, nay though you fling it up never so often, teach a stone to ascend of itself: and so it is in many other instances in which nature is peremptory: but nature is not always so; but sometimes hath a great latitude: as we see in young trees, which though they naturally grow straight up, yet being gently bent may be made to grow any way. But above all, moral inclinations

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clinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are subject to the power of a contrary custom.

Indeed children when they come to be men, should take great care, that they do not owe their religion only to custom; but they should upon consideration and due examination of the grounds of it, so far as they are capable of doing it, make it their choice. And yet for all that we must not deny the best religion in the world this greatest advantage of all others. It is certainly a great happiness for children to be inclined to that which when they come to understand themselves they would make their choice, if they were indifferent: but an indifferency cannot be preserved in children: and therefore, since they will certainly be biased one way or other, there is all the reason in the world why we should endeavour to bias them the better way. Parents may often mistake about what is best, but if they love their children they cannot but wish and endeavour that they may be good and do what is best.

I come now to the last head I proposed, which was,

V. To endeavour by the most powerful arguments I can offer, to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

If the foregoing discourse be true, what can be said to those who are guilty in the highest degree of the gross neglect of this great duty? who neither by instruction, nor example, nor restraint from evil, do endeavour to make their children good. Some parents are such monsters, I had almost said devils, as not to know how “ to give good things

“ to

“ to their children ;” but instead of bread give them a stone, instead of a fish give them a serpent, instead of an egg give them a scorpion, as our SAVIOUR expresseth it.

These are evil indeed, who train up their children for ruin and destruction ; in the service of the devil, and in the trade and mystery of iniquity : who, instead of teaching them the fear of the LORD, infuse into them the principles of atheism, and irreligion, and profaneness : instead of teaching them to love and reverence religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to make a mock both of sin and holiness : instead of training them up in the knowledge of “ the holy scriptures which are able “ to make men wise unto salvation,” they do *ædificare ad gehennam*, “ they edify them for hell,” by teaching them to profane that holy book, and to abuse the word of GOD which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into jest and rallery : instead of teaching them to pray and to bless the name of GOD, they teach them to blaspheme that great and terrible name, and to profane it by their continual oaths and imprecations : and instead of bringing them to GOD’s church, they carry them to the devil’s chapels, to playhouses and places of debauchery, those schools and nurseries of lewdness and vice.

Thus they, who ought to be the great teachers and examples of holiness and virtue, are the chief encouragers and patterns of vice and wickedness in their children ; and instead of restraining them from evil, they countenance them in it, and check all forward inclinations to goodness ; till at last they make them ten times more the children of wrath, than they

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they were by that corrupt nature which they derived from them; and hereby treasure up, both for their children and themselves, "wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

But I hope there are few or none such here. They do not use to frequent God's house and worship. And therefore I shall apply my self to those who are not so notoriously guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good education of their children. And for the greater conviction of such parents, I shall offer to them the following considerations.

First, consider what a sad inheritance you have conveyed to your children. You have transmitted to them corrupt and depraved natures, evil and vicious inclinations: you have begotten them in your own image and likeness, so that by nature they are children of wrath. Now methinks parents that have a due sense of this should be very solicitous, by the best means they can use, to free them from that curse; by endeavouring to correct those perverse dispositions and cursed inclinations which they have transmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken estate which from you is descended upon them.

When a man hath by treason tainted his blood and forfeited his estate, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his children, and think of the injury he hath done to them by his fault? and how solicitous is he, before he die, to petition the king for favour to his children? how earnestly doth he charge his friends to be careful of them
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and kind to them? that by these means he may make the best reparation he can of their fortune which hath been ruin'd by his fault.

And have parents such a tenderness for their children, in reference to their estate and condition in this world; and have they none for the good estate of their souls and their eternal condition in another world? if you are sensible that their blood is tainted, and that their best fortunes are ruin'd by your sad misfortunes; why do you not bestir your selves for the repairing of GOD's image in them? Why do you not "travel in birth till CHRIST be formed in them?" Why do you not pray earnestly to GOD and give him no rest, who hath reprieved, and it may be pardoned you, that he would extend his grace to them also, and grant them the blessings of his new covenant?

All your children are begotten of the bond-woman; therefore we should pray as Abraham did, "O that Ishmael may live in thy fight:" O that these sons of Hagar may be heirs of a blessing.

Secondly, consider in the next place, that good education is the very best inheritance that you can leave to your children. It is a wise saying of Solomon, "that wisdom is good with an inheritance;" but surely an inheritance, without wisdom and virtue to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many parents are there who omit no care and industry to get an estate that they may leave it to their children, but use no means to form their minds and manners for the right use and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much hap-

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pier for them to have been left in great poverty and straits?

Dost thou love thy child? this is true love to any one, to do the best for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good education. All other things are uncertain. You may raise your children to honour, and settle a noble estate upon them to support it. You may leave them, as you think, to faithful guardians, and by kindness and obligation procure them many friends: and when you have done all this, their guardians may prove unfaithful and treacherous, and in the changes and revolutions of the world their honours may slip from under them, and their "riches may take to themselves wings and fly away:" And when these are gone, and they come to be nipp'd with the frosts of adversity, their friends will fall off like leaves in autumn. "This is a fore evil, which yet I have seen under the sun."

But if the good education of your children hath made them wise and virtuous, you have provided an inheritance for them which is out of the reach of fortune, and cannot be taken from them. Crates the philosopher used to stand in the highest places of the city, and cry out to the inhabitants, "O ye people! why do you toil to get estates for your children, when you take no care for their education?" This is, as Diogenes said, to take care of the shoe, but none of the foot that is to wear it; to take great pains for an estate for your children,

dren, but none at all to teach them how to use it; that is, to take great care to undo them, but none to make them happy.

Thirdly, consider that by a careful and religious education of your children you provide for your own comfort and happiness. However they happen to prove, you will have the comfort of a good conscience and of having done your duty. If they be good, they are matter of great comfort and joy to their parents. "A wise son, saith Solomon, maketh a glad father." It is a great satisfaction to see that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and industry, and that the work of our hands doth prosper. The son of Sirach, among several things for which he reckons a man happy, mentions this in the first place, "He that hath joy of his children."

Ecclus.

xxv, 7.

On the contrary, in wicked children the honour of a family fails, our name withers, and in the next generation will be quite blotted out: whereas a hopeful posterity is a prospect of a kind of eternity. We cannot leave a better and more lasting monument of our selves, than in wise and virtuous children. Buildings and books are but dead things in comparison of these living memorials of our selves.

By the good education of your children you provide for your selves some of the best comforts both for this world and the other. For this world; and that at such a time when you most stand in need of comfort, I mean the time of sickness and old age. Wise men have been wont to lay up some

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præsidia senectutis, something to support them in that gloomy and melancholy time, as books, and friends, or the like. But there is no such external comfort at such a time as good and dutiful children. They will then be the light of our eyes, and the cordial of our fainting spirits; and will recompense all our former care of them by their present care of us; and when we are decaying and withering away, we shall have the pleasure to see our youth as it were renewed, and our selves flourishing again in our children. The son of Sirach speaking of the comfort which a good father hath in a well educated son, "Though he die, says he, yet he is as if he were not dead, for he hath left one behind him that is like himself. While he lived he saw and rejoiced in him, and when he died he was not sorrowful."

Ecclus.
xxx. 4, 5.

Whereas on the contrary, "a foolish son is, as Solomon tells us, a heaviness to his mother," the miscarriage of a child being apt most tenderly to affect the mother. Such parents as neglect their children, do as it were provide so many pains and aches for themselves against they come to be old. And rebellious children are to their infirm and aged parents so many aggravations of an evil day, so many burdens of their age: they help to bow them down and "to bring their gray hairs so much the sooner with sorrow to the grave." They do usually repay their parents all the neglect of their education by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good children will likewise be an unspeakable comfort to us in the other world. When we come to appear before God at the day of judgment,

ment, to be able to say to him, "Lo! here am I
"and the children which thou hast given me:" how
will this comfort our hearts, and make us lift up
our heads with joy in that day?

Fourthly, consider that the surest foundation of
the publick welfare and happiness is laid in the
good education of children: families are increased
by children, and cities and nations are made up of
families. And this is a matter of so great concern-
ment both to religion and the civil happiness of a
nation, that anciently the best constituted common-
wealths did commit this care to the magistrate more
than to parents.

When Antipater demanded of the Spartans fifty
of their children for hostages, they offer'd rather
to deliver to him twice as many men; so much
did they value the loss of their country's education.
But now amongst us this work lies chiefly upon
parents. There are several ways of reforming men;
by the laws of the civil magistrate, and by the pub-
lick preaching of ministers. But the most likely
and hopeful reformation of the world must begin
with children. Wholsom laws and good sermons
are but slow and late ways: the timely and the most
compendious way is a good education. This may be
an effectual prevention of evil, whereas all after-ways
are but remedies, which do always suppose some
neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our laws leave so much to parents,
our care should be so much the greater: and we
should remember that we bring up our children for
the publick, and that if they live to be men, as
they come out of our hands they will prove a pub-
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lick happiness or mischief to the age. So that we can no way better deserve of mankind and be greater benefactors to the world, than by peopling it with a righteous offspring. Good children are the hopes of posterity, and we cannot leave the world a better legacy than well-disciplin'd children. This gives the world the best security that religion will be propagated to posterity, and that the generations to come shall know God, "and the children that are to be born shall fear the LORD."

This was the great glory of Abraham, next to his being the friend of God, that he was the father of the faithful. And the careful education of children, "in the nurture and admonition of the LORD," is so honourable to parents, that God himself would not pass it by in Abraham without special mention of it to his everlasting commendation: "I know Abraham, says God, that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD, and to do justice and judgment."

Gen. xviii.
19.

Fifthly, consider yet further the great evils consequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in this, the final miscarriage and ruin of children. Do but leave depraved corrupt nature to itself, and it will take its own course, and the end of it in all probability will be miserable.

If the generous seeds of religion and virtue be not carefully sown in the tender minds of children, and those seeds be not cultivated by good education, there will certainly spring up briars and thorns, of which parents will not only feel the inconveniences,

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conveniences, but every body else that comes near them.

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Neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris.

If the ground be not planted with something that is good, it will bring forth that which is either useless or hurtful, or both ; for nature is seldom barren, it will either bring forth useful plants, or weeds.

We are naturally inclined to evil, and the neglect of education puts children upon a kind of necessity of becoming what they are naturally inclined to be. Do but let them alone, and they will soon be habituated to sin and vice. And when they are once accustomed to do evil, they have lost their liberty and choice : they are then hardly capable of good counsel and instruction : or if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound in the chains of their sins, and led captive by Satan at his pleasure. And when they have brought themselves into this condition, their ruin seems to be sealed, and without a miracle of God's grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the mischief of this neglect end here, but it extends it self to the publick, and to posterity. If we neglect the good education of our children, they will in all probability prove bad men ; and these will neglect their children ; and so the foundation of an endless mischief is laid ; and our posterity will be bad members both of church and commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of instruction, they will either be ignorant or erroneous : either they will not mind religion, or they will disturb the

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the church with new and wild opinions: and I fear, that the neglect of instructing and catechizing youth, of which this age hath been so grossly guilty, hath made it so fruitful of errors and strange opinions.

But if besides this, no care be taken of their lives and manners, they will become burdens of the earth, and pests of humane society, and so much poison and infection let abroad into the world.

Sixthly and lastly, parents should often consider that the neglect of this duty will not only involve them in the inconvenience and shame, and sorrow, of their childrens miscarriage, but in a great measure in the guilt of it: they will have a great share in all the evil they do, and be in some sort chargeable with all the sins they commit. If the children bring forth wild and sour grapes, the parents teeth will be set on edge.

The temporal mischiefs and inconveniences which come from the careless education of children as to credit, health and estate, all which do usually suffer by the vicious and lewd courses of your children; these methinks should awaken your care and diligence: but what is this to the guilt which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedness will be put upon your score; and possibly the sins, which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other world, and bring new fuel to hell, to heat that furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that parents must one day be accountable for all their neglects of their children: and so likewise shall ministers and masters of families for their people and servants, so far as they had the charge of them.

And

And what will parents be able to say to God at the day of judgment for all their neglects of their children, in matter of instruction, and example, and restraint from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God shall arise terribly to judgment, and say to you, "Behold! the children which I have given you; they were ignorant, and you instructed them not; they made themselves vile, and you restrained them not: why did not you teach them at home, and bring them to church to the public ordinances and worship of God, and train them up to the exercise of piety and devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them good instruction, but you gave them bad example: and lo! they have followed you to hell, to be an addition to your torment there."

"Unnatural wretches! that have thus neglected, and by your neglect destroyed those, whose happiness by so many bonds of duty and affection you were obliged to procure: behold! the books are now open, and there is not one prayer upon record that ever you put up for your children: there is no memorial, no not so much as of one hour that ever was seriously spent to train them up to a sense of God, and to the knowledge of their duty: but on the contrary it appears, that you have many ways contrived their misery, and contributed to their ruin, and help'd forward their damnation. How could you be thus unnatural? How could you thus hate your own flesh, and hate your own souls? How much better had it been for them, and how much better for you, that they had never been born?"

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Would not such a heavy charge as this make every joint of you to tremble? will it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very souls, to have your children challenge you in that day, and say to you one by one, "Had you been as careful to teach me the good knowledge of the LORD, as I was capable of learning it: had you been but as forward to instruct me in my duty, as I was ready to have hearken'd to it, it had not been with me as it is at this day; I had not now stood trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal doom which is just ready to be pass'd upon me. Cursed be the man that begat me, and the paps that gave me suck. 'Tis to you that I must in a great measure owe my everlasting undoing." Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our children "in that great and terrible day of the LORD?"

I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would by all this, if it be possible, awaken parents to a sense of their duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many parents are as to the religious education of their children, I cannot but think of that saying of Augustus concerning Herod, "Better be his dog than his child." I think it was spoken to another purpose, but it is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of: better be some mens dogs, or hawks, or horses, than

than their children: for they take a greater care
to breed and train up these to their several ends
and uses, than to breed up their children for eternal
happiness.

Upon all these accounts, “train up a child in
“the way he should go, that when he is old he
“may not depart from it:” that neither your
children may be miserable by your fault, nor you
by the neglect of so natural and necessary a duty
towards them. God grant that all that are con-
cerned may lay these things seriously to heart,
for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST; to whom,
with thee O FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, be
all honour and glory both now and ever. Amen.

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S E R M O N LIV.

Of the advantages of an early piety.

Preached in the church of St. *Lawrence-Jury*,
in the year 1662.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

*Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth,
while the evil days come not, nor the years draw
nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

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IN the former discourses, concerning the education of children, I have carried the argument through the state of childhood to the beginning of the next step of their age which we call youth; when they come to exercise their reason, and to be fit to take upon themselves the performance of that solemn vow which was made for them by their sureties in baptism.

To encourage them to set seriously and in good earnest about this work, I shall now add another discourse concerning the advantages of an early piety. And to this purpose I have chosen for the foundation of it these words of Solomon, in his book called Ecclesiastes or the Preacher: “ Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days

“ come

"come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them."

It will not be necessary to give an account of the context any further than to tell you, that this book of the royal preacher is a lively description of the vanity of the world in general, and particularly of the life of man. This is the main body of his sermon, in which there are here and there scattered many serious reflexions upon ourselves, and very weighty considerations to quicken our preparations for our latter end, and to put us in mind of "the days of darkness which will be many," as the preacher tells us in the chapter before the text.

Among these is the admonition and advice in the words of the text: which do indeed concern those that are young, but yet will afford useful matter of meditation to persons of all ages and conditions whatsoever: of great thankfulness to almighty God from those who by the grace of God, and his blessing upon a pious education, have entred upon a religious course betimes: and of a deep sorrow and repentance to those who have neglected and let slip this best opportunity of their lives; and of taking up a firm resolution of redeeming that loss, as much as is possible, by their future care and diligence: and to them more especially, who are grown old and have not yet begun this great and necessary work, it will minister occasion to resolve upon a speedy retreat, and without any further delay to return to God and their duty; lest the opportunity of doing it, which is now almost quite spent, be lost for ever.

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The text contains a duty, which is "to remember our creator;" and a limitation of it, more especially to one particular age and time of our life; "in the days of our youth:" not to exclude any other age, but to lay a particular emphasis and weight upon this: "remember thy creator in the days of thy youth," that is, more especially in this age of thy life: to intimate to us, both that this is the fittest season, and that we cannot begin this work too soon.

And this is further illustrated by the opposition of it to old age: "when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, of which thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them:" this is a description of old age, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which in respect of the cares and griefs, the distempers and infirmities which usually attend it, is rather a burden than a pleasure.

In the handling of these words, I shall do these three things,

First, I shall consider the nature of the act or duty here injoin'd, and that is "to remember God."

Secondly, I shall consider what there is in the notion of God as creator which is more particularly apt to awaken, and oblige us to the remembrance of him.

Thirdly, I shall consider the limitation of this duty more especially to this particular age of our lives, "the days of our youth:" why we should begin this work then, and not put it off to the time of old age.

I. I shall consider the nature of the act or duty here injoin'd, which is "to remember our creator."

“tor.” For the understanding of which expression and others of the like nature in scripture, it is to be consider’d that it is very usual in scripture to express religion and the whole duty of man by some eminent act, or principle, or part of religion : sometimes by the knowledge of God, and by faith in him ; and very frequently by the fear and by the love of God ; because these are the great principles and parts of religion : and so likewise, though not so frequently, religion is express’d by the remembrance of God : now remembrance is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To remember God is to have him actually in our minds, and upon all proper occasions to revive the thoughts of him, and as David expresseth it, to set him always before us : “ I set the LORD, says he, always before me,” that is, God was continually present to his mind and thoughts.

And in opposition to this we find wicked men in scripture described by the contrary quality, forgetfulness of God : so they are described in Job ; Job viii. “ such are the paths of them that forget God,”¹³ that is, of the wicked : and the same description David gives of them. “ The wicked, says he, Psal. ix. “ shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that “ forget God :” and elsewhere he gives the same character of a wicked man, “ that God is not in all “ his thoughts.”

And the course of a religious life is not unfitly express’d by our remembrance of God. For to remember a person or thing is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting occasions : to think actually of them, so as to do that which the remembrance

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membrance of them does require, or prompt us to, To remember a friend, is to be ready upon occasion to do him all good offices: to remember a kindness and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and requite it when there is an opportunity: to remember an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: and in a word, to remember any thing is to be mindful to do that which the memory of such a thing doth naturally suggest to us.

So that to remember God, is frequently and in our most serious and retired thoughts to consider that there is such a being as God is; of all power and perfection, who made us and all other things, and hath given us laws to live by, suitable to our natures; and will call us to a strict account for our observance or violation of them, and accordingly reward or punish us; very often in this world, and to be sure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of God and of his infinite perfections, and to live continually under the power and awe of these apprehensions, that he is infinitely wise and good, holy and just; that he is always present with us, and observes what we do, and is intimate to our most secret thoughts, "and will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil;" as the preacher tells us in the conclusion of this sermon.

The duty then here required of us, is so soon as we arrive at the use of reason and the exercise of our understandings, to take God into consideration, and to begin a religious course of life betimes; to consecrate the beginning of our days and the flower and strength

strength of them to his service : whilst our mind is yet soft and tender, and in a great measure free from all other impressions, to be mindful of the being that is above us; and in all our designs and actions to take God into consideration, and to do every thing in his fear, and with an eye to his glory. "Remember thy creator," that is, honour, fear, love, obey and serve him; and in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of God, and hath him continually in his thoughts.

II. I shall in the next place consider, what there is in the notion of God as our creator that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of God. The text does not barely require us to remember God, but to remember him as the author and founder of our Beings; "Remember thy creator." And there is certainly some particular emphasis in it, so that God considered under the notion of our creator is apt to strike us with a particular regard and awe of him. And that upon a threefold account; as creation is a sensible demonstration to us, 1st, Of the being. 2dly, Of the power; and 3dly, Of the goodness of God.

First, Of his being. The creation is of all other the most sensible and obvious argument of a Deity. Other considerations may work upon our reason and understanding, but this doth as it were bring God down to our senses. So often as we look up to heaven, or down upon the earth; upon ourselves, or into ourselves; upon the things without us, and round about us; which way soever we turn our eyes, we are encountered with plain evidences of a superior being, which made us and all other things: every thing

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which we behold with our eyes doth in some way or other represent God to us and bring him to our minds, so as we cannot avoid the sight of him, if we would. So the psalmist tells us, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shews the work of his hands." And so likewise St. Paul, "The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made; even his eternal power and godhead."

Psal. xix.
1.

Rom. i.
20.

Secondly, as the creation is a demonstration of God's infinite power. And this consideration is apt to work upon our fear, the most wakeful passion of all other in the soul of man: insomuch that the atheist would fain ascribe the original apprehension and belief of a deity to the natural fears of men; *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, "Fear first made Gods;" and by this means would fain persuade us that it is so far from being true that God is our creator, that he is merely the creature of our own vain fear and imagination.

But surely this is very unreasonable. For if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reason why we should stand in awe of him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; because he who made us and all other things, if we neglect him and forget so great a benefactor, can as easily make us miserable, or turn us out of being. Therefore "remember thy creator," and despise or forget him at thy utmost peril.

Thirdly, as the creation is a demonstration of the goodness of God to his creatures. This consideration of God as our creator, doth naturally suggest

to our minds, that his goodness brought us into being; and that if being be a benefit, God is the fountain and author of it; that his goodness called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are; "for of his good pleasure we are and were created." He was under no necessity of doing it; for he was from eternal ages happy in himself before we were, and would have been so to all eternity though we had never been; nor was it possible he could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And he is not only our creator as he gave us our beings at first, but likewise as we are preserved and continued in life by the same goodness which first gave us life and breath; "for of his goodness we ARE as well as were created."

And can we forget so great a benefactor, and be "unmindful of the God that formed us?" Can we choose but remember the founder of our beings, the great patron and preserver of our lives? And so soon as we arrive at the use of reason, and discover this great benefactor to whom we owe our lives and all the blessings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to say with David, "O come, let us worship and fall down and kneel before the LORD our maker: for he is the LORD our God, it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." I proceed to consider in the

III. and last place, the reason of the limitation of this duty more especially to this particular age of our

S E R M. lives, "Remember now thy creator in the days of
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" thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the
" years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no
" pleasure in them:" " now ; in the days of thy
" youth ;" by which Solomon plainly designs two
things,

First, To engage young persons to begin this
great and necessary work of religion betimes, and
as soon as ever they are capable of taking it into
consideration, " Remember thy creator in the days
" of thy youth." And the son of Sirach much
to the same purpose, speaking of one that in good
earnest applies his heart to wisdom, describes him
in this manner, " He will give his heart to resort
" early to the LORD that made him ;" which is
the same with the expression in the text, " of re-
" membring our creator in the days of our
" youth."

Secondly, to engage young persons to set about
this work presently, and not to defer it and put it
off to the future, as most are apt to do ; " Remem-
" ber now thy creator in the days of thy youth:"
especially, not to adjourn it to the most unfit and
improper time of all other, to the time of infir-
mity and old age, " now, the days of thy youth ;
" when the evil days come not, nor the years draw
" nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in
" them : while the sun, or the light, or the moon,
" or the stars be not darken'd, &c."

And how much reason there is to press both these
considerations upon young persons, I shall endea-
vour to shew in the following particulars.

First,

First, because in this age of our lives we have the greatest and most sensible obligation. "to remember God our creator: in the days of our youth," when the blessing and benefit of life is new, and the memory of it fresh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be so, but we find it true which Seneca says, *Nihil citius senescit quàm gratia*, "Nothing sooner grows old and out of date than obligations;" and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greatest reason to remember.

In this age of our life, when we begin to come to the free use and exercise of our reason, the first thing we are instructed in, and if we were not taught it we should, though perhaps more slowly, discover and find it out of ourselves: I say, the first thing we are instructed in and inquisitive about is the author of our beings, and how we came into the world: and when God first appears to our minds, and we come by degrees clearly to understand by whose bounty and blessing it is that we are and have been preserved thus long, without our own care; principally by the providence of God, and under him by those instruments which he hath raised and preserved for that purpose: when we consider this, we cannot but be strangely surprized both with the novelty of the benefit and the greatness of it.

And when we have well viewed ourselves, and look'd about us, upon the Creatures below us, all of them subject to our dominion and use: and when we consider seriously in what a noble rank and order of creatures we are placed; and how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, not groveling upon the earth or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful

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tiful and upright shape of body, and such a majesty of countenance, as if we were all kings of the creation; and which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with minds and understandings, with reason and speech, whereby we are capable not only of conversing with and benefiting one another, but also of the knowledge and friendship and enjoyment of the best and most perfect of beings, God himself: I say when we first consider this and meditate seriously upon it, can we possibly ever after forget God? Shall we not naturally break out into that enquiry which Elihu thinks so proper for man that he wonders it is not in every man's mouth, "Where is God my maker, who teacheth me more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh me wiser than the fowls of heaven?"

Job xxxv.
10, 11.

So that there is a very special obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this age of our lives, when we first come to the knowledge of him, and when the sense of his favours is fresh and new to us; and not only so, but when the blessing of life is at the very best and in its verdure and flower; when our health is in its strength and vigor, and the pleasures and enjoyment of life have their full taste and perfect relish. So Job describes the days of his youth,

Job xxix.
2, 3, 4.

"O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness, as I was in the days of my youth, &c."

Indeed when the evil days are once come, and thou art enter'd upon the years in which thou thyself hast no pleasure, there might be some sort of pretence then

to

to forget God ; because then life begins to wither SERM.
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and decay, and not only the gloss and beauty but
even the comfort and sweetness of it is gone, and
it becomes an insipid and tasteless thing : “ but
“ thou art inexcusable, O man, whoever thou art,”
if thou art unmindful of God in the best age of
thy life, and when the sense of his benefits ought
upon all accounts to make the strongest and deepest
impressions upon thy mind.

Secondly, the reason will be yet stronger to put
us upon this, if we consider that notwithstanding
the great obligation which lies upon us “ to re-
“ member our creator in the days of our youth,”
we are most apt at that time of all other to forget
him. For that which is the great blessing of youth
is also the great danger of it, I mean the health
and prosperity of it ; and though men have then
least reason, yet they are most apt to forget God
in the height of pleasure and in the abundance of all
things.

Youth is extremely addicted to pleasure, because
it is most capable and most sensible of it ; and
where we are most apt to be transported, there we
are most apt to transgress. Nothing does so besot
the mind and extinguish in it all sense of divine
things as sensual pleasures. If we fall in love with
them, they will take off our thoughts from religion
and steal away our hearts from God. “ For no
“ man can serve two masters,” and “ the carnal
“ mind is enmity against God.”

Besides that youth is rash and inconsiderate, be-
cause unexperienced ; and consequently not apt to
be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future con-
cernments

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cernments of this temporal life; much less of that which seems to be at so much a greater distance, and for that reason is so very seldom in our thoughts.

Thirdly, because this age is of all other the fittest and best to begin a religious course of life. And this does not contradict the former argument, though it seems to do so. For as it is true of children, that they are most prone to be idle and yet fittest to learn; so in the case we are speaking of both are true, that youth is an age wherein we are too apt, if left to our selves, to forget God and religion, and yet at the same time fittest to receive the impressions of it.

Youth is *ætas discipline*, the proper age of discipline; very obsequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of impression and imbibe any tincture: now we should lay hold of this golden opportunity. This age of suppleness, and obedience, and patience for labour, should be plied by parents, before that rigor and stiffness which grows with years comes on too fast. Childhood and youth are choice seasons for planting of religion and virtue, and if parents and teachers sleep in this seed-time they are ill husbandmen; for this is the time of plowing and sowing.

This age is certainly the most proper for instruction, according to that of the prophet, "Whom
Isa. xxviii. 9. shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make
" to understand doctrine? them that are weaned
" from the milk and drawn from the breast. For
" precept must be upon precept, and line upon
" line, here a little and there a little." And the
sooner

sooner this is done, the better; only things must be
instilled into them gently and by degrees.

It is a noted saying of Aristotle, "that young
persons are not fit to hear lectures of moral phi-
losophy;" because at that age passion is so pre-
dominant and unruly: by which, I think, he only
means that the minds of young persons are least
prepared to receive the precepts of morality and
to submit to them; but that he does not hereby in-
tend, that therefore no care ought to be used to
form the minds and manners of youth to virtue
and goodness. He certainly understood the nature
and power of evil habits too well to be of that
mind; and consequently must think that the prin-
ciples of morality ought with great care and dili-
gence to be instill'd into young persons betimes:
because they of all other have the most need of this
kind of instruction, and this age is the most pro-
per season for it: and the less their minds are pre-
pared for it, so much the more pains ought to be
taken with them, that they may be taught to go-
vern and subdue their passions before they grow too
stiff and headstrong. So that if the seeds of reli-
gion and virtue be not planted in our younger
years, what is to be expected in old age? accord-
ing to that of the son of Sirach, "If thou hast
gathered nothing in thy youth, how canst thou
expect to find any thing in thine age?"

Young years are tender and easily wrought up-
on, apt to be moulded into any fashion; they are
audum & molle lutum, "like moist and soft clay"
which is pliable to any form; but soon grows hard,
and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a

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very difficult thing to make impressions upon age; and to deface the evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good instruction hath been neglected at first, a conceited ignorance doth commonly take possession, and obstruct all the passages through which knowledge and wisdom should enter into us.

Upon this consideration the work of religion should be begun betimes, because it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is just the same thing for young persons to be enter'd into a religious course, and to have their minds habituated to virtue before vicious customs have got place and strength in us: for whoever shall attempt this afterwards will meet with infinite difficulty and opposition, and must dispute his ground by inches.

It is good therefore to do that which must be done one time or other, when it is easiest to be done; when we may do it with the greatest advantage, and are likely to meet with the least and weakest opposition. We should anticipate vice and prevent the devil and the world, by letting God into our hearts betimes, and giving religion the first seizure and possession of our souls. This is the time of sowing our seed, which must by no means be neglected. For the soul will not lie fallow; good or evil will come up. If our minds be not cultivated by religion, sin and vice will get the possession of them: but if our tender years be seasoned with the knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following course of our lives.

In a word, this age of our lives is proper for labour and conflict; because youth is full of heat and vigor, of courage and resolution to enterprize and effect difficult things. This heat indeed renders young persons very unfit to advise and direct themselves, and therefore they have need to be advised and directed by those who are wiser and more experienced: but yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are bad at counsel, they are admirable at execution, when their heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickness, of courage and constancy in the way wherein they are set.

Besides, that youth hath a great sense of honour and virtue, of praise and commendation, which are of great force to engage young persons to attempt worthy and excellent things. For hope and confidence, strength and courage, with which sense of honour and desire of praise are apt to inspire them, are admirable instruments of victory and mastery in any kind; and these are proper and most peculiar to youth. "I write unto you young men, saith St. John, because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil one."

And, besides the spirit and vigor of youth, young persons have several other qualities which make them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, because they have not been often deceived; and this is a very good quality in a learner. And they are full of hopes, which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their strength; because hope is always of the future, and the life of young persons is in a great mea-

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sure before them and yet to come. And, which is a good bridle to restrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modest and bashful: and which is also a singular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honest and commendable than that which is gainful and profitable, being in a great measure free from the love of money, which experience, as well as the apostle, tells us “is the root of all evil.” Children are very seldom covetous, because they have seldom been bitten by want.

Fourthly, this is the most acceptable time of all other, because it is the first of our age. Under the law the first fruits and the first-born were God's. In like manner we should devote the first of our age and time to him. God is the first and most excellent of beings, and therefore it is fit that the prime of our age and the excellency of our strength should be dedicated to him and his service.

An early piety must needs be very acceptable and pleasing to God. Our blessed LORD took great pleasure to see little children come unto him; an emblem of the pleasure he takes that men should lift themselves betimes in his service. St. John was the youngest of all the disciples, and our SAVIOUR had a very particular kindness and affection for him; for he is said to be “the disciple whom JESUS loved.”

It is a good sign that we value God as we ought, and have a true esteem for his service, when we can find in our hearts to give him our good days, and the years which we ourselves have pleasure in: and that we have a grateful sense of his benefits and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make

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the quickest and best returns we can, and think no-
thing too good to render to him from whom we
have received all.

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It is likewise an argument of great sincerity, which is the Soul of all religion and virtue, when a man devotes himself to God betimes; because it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by those forcible constraints, nor driven to God by that pressing necessity which lies upon men in time of sickness and old age. And on the contrary, it cannot but be very displeasing to God to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigour of our age: when our blood is warm and our spirits quick, and our parts are at the best, then to think ourselves too good to serve God; what an affront is this to him who hath deserved so infinitely well of us, and beyond the best and utmost that we can possibly do?

Besides, that there is a peculiar kind of grace and loveliness in the worthy and excellent actions of young persons, great things being hardly expected from them at that age. Early habits of virtue, like new clothes upon a young and comely body, sit very gracefully upon a straight and well-shap'd mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is joy in heaven at the conversion of a great and old sinner, so it cannot but be a very delightful spectacle to God and angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, to see a young person, besieged by powerful temptations on every side, to acquit himself gloriously, and resolutely to hold out against the most violent assaults: to behold one in the prime and flower of his age, that is courted
by

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by pleasures and honours, by the devil and all the bewitching vanities of this world, to reject all these and to cleave steadfastly to God: nay, to frown upon all these temptations and to look down upon them with indignation and scorn, and to say, let those dote upon these things who know no better: let them adore sensual pleasures and lying vanities, who are ignorant of the sincere and solid pleasures of religion and virtue: let them run into the arms of temptation who can forget God their creator, their preserver, and the guide of their youth: as for me, I will serve the LORD, and will employ my whole time either innocently or usefully, in serving God, and in doing good to men who are made after the image of God. This work shall take up my whole life, there shall be no void or empty space in it; I will endeavour, as much as possibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the devil and his temptations to enter in: LORD, I will be thine, I have chosen thee for my happiness and my portion for ever: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. Lo! they that are far from thee shall perish: but it is good for me to draw near to God," to begin and end my days in his fear and to his glory.

Fifthly and lastly, this age of our life may, for any thing we know, be the only time we may have for this purpose; and if we cast off the thoughts of God and defer the business of religion to old age, intending, as we pretend, to set about it at that time, we may be cut off before that time comes, "and turned into hell with the people that forget God."

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The work of religion is the most necessary of all other, and must be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too soon, but we may easily delay it too long; and then we are miserable past all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal soul, and put his everlasting happiness upon the greatest hazard and uncertainty, must make religion his first business and care, must think of God betimes "and remember his creator" "in the days of his youth."

I have now done with the three things which I proposed to consider from these words. The Inferences from this whole discourse shall be these two,

First, to persuade those that are young to remember God their creator, and to engage in the ways of religion and virtue betimes.

Secondly, to urge those who have neglected this first and best opportunity of their lives, to repent quickly and return to a better mind; lest the opportunity be lost for ever, and their case becomes desperate and past remedy.

First, to persuade those that are young to remember God their creator betimes, and to engage early in the ways of religion and virtue. Do not suffer yourselves to be cheated and bewitched by sensual satisfaction, and to be destroyed by ease and prosperity. Let not a perpetual tenor of health and pleasure soften and dissolve your spirits, and banish all wise and serious thoughts out of your minds. Be not so foolish and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is most mindful of you; "when the candle of the LORD shines about your tabernacle," and you are enjoying the health, and strength, and sweetness of life.

No

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No man knows what he does, and what an invaluable treasure he prodigally wastes, when he lets slip this golden season and opportunity of his life; whilst he is yet innocent and untainted with sin and vice, and his mind is clear of all bad impressions, and capable of the best; not enslaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Consider that the ways of religion and virtue are nothing so difficult and unpleasant now, as they will be hereafter: and that the longer you forget God, and the more you are estranged from him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him and to return to him: that your lusts will every day gain more strength, and your hearts by degrees will contract such a stiffness and hardness that it will be no easy matter to work upon them.

Therefore "remember your creator in the days of your youth: to day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." When will you think of beginning a good course, if not now? You have a great work before you, which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finished at once. Your whole life is no more than sufficient for it; to do it to the best advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your life, much less of putting it off to the very end of it: "when that night comes, no man can work."

Consider further; if we will deny God the hearty and vigorous service of our best days, how can we expect that he will accept the faint and flattering devotions of old age? Wise men are wont to forecast

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and provide some stay and comfort for themselves against the evils and infirmities of that time; that they may have something to lean upon in their weakness, something to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy evening: that what they cannot enjoy of present pleasure and satisfaction may in some measure be made up to them in comfortable reflexions upon the past actions of a holy and innocent, an useful and well-spent life.

But on the other hand, if we have neglected religion, and forgotten God days without number; if we have lived an ungodly and vicious life, we have treasured up so much guilt and remorse, so many aggravations of our sorrow and anguish against an evil day; and have foolishly contrived to make our burden then heaviest, when we are least able to stand under it; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for repentance, when there is hardly any space and opportunity left for the exercise of it; and when we shall be utterly disheartened from setting about so vast a work, of which we can see no end; and yet have so little time for it, that if we do any thing at all in it we shall be forced to huddle it up in so much haste and confusion, as will, I doubt, signify but very little either to our present comfort, or our future happiness.

Consider this in time, all ye that forget God in the day of your prosperity and in the best age of your life, and yet when the day of affliction and the infirmities of age come upon you, you would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldst not have him “cast thee off in
“thine old age, and forsake thee when thy strength

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“ fails, do thou remember him in the days of thy youth,” in the prime and vigour of thine age: “ for this is the acceptable time, this is the day of “ salvation.”

Therefore “ acquaint thyself with him, and remember him now ; in the days of thy youth ;” defer not so necessary a work, no not for one moment : begin it just now, that so thou mayest have made some good progress in it “ before the evil days come ; “ before the sun, and the moon, and the stars be “ darkened,” and all the comforts and joys of life be fled and gone.

Be not deceived, O man, whosoever thou art ; “ for God is not mocked.” He will not be put off by us “ with the days in which we ourselves have no “ pleasure.” Offer up thyself a living sacrifice and not a carcase, if thou wouldst be accepted. Do not provoke and affront the living God by offering up to him faint spirits, and feeble hands, and dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful to us in giving us the best blessings of life, and all things richly to enjoy ; and do we grudge him the most valuable part of our lives, “ and the years which we “ ourselves have pleasure in ? Do we thus requite the “ LORD ? foolish people and unwise !” Is the giver of all good things unworthy to receive from us any thing that is good ? “ If we offer up the lame in “ sacrifice, is it not evil ? and if we offer up the “ blind, is it not evil ? Offer it now to thy governor, and try if he will be pleased with thee and accept thy person.” Hath God deserved so ill at our hands, that we should forget and neglect him ? and hath the devil deserved so well of us, that we should

should be contented to spend the best part of our lives in his service, which is perfect slavery? Was he our creator, or can he make us happy? Nay, does he not carry on a most malicious design to make us for ever miserable?

Secondly, let me urge those who have neglected this first and best opportunity of their lives to repent quickly and return to a better mind, lest all opportunity of doing it be lost for ever, and their case become desperate and past remedy. Resolve to redeem, if it be possible, the time which you should have improved: you have squander'd away too much already, waste no more of this precious opportunity of life: you have deferred a necessary work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude yourselves with vain hopes that this work may be done at any time, and in an instant; and that if you can but fashion your last breath into "LORD have mercy upon me," this will prevail with God and make atonement for the long course of a wicked and sinful life. What strange thoughts have men of God and heaven, what extravagant conceits of the little evil of sin and the great easiness of repentance, that can impose upon themselves at this rate?

Bethink yourselves better in time, "consider and shew yourselves men." What will you do in the day of your distress, who have neglected God in your most flourishing and prosperous condition? What will you say to him in a dying hour, who scarce ever had one serious thought of him all your life? Can you have the face at that time to bespeak him in this manner? "LORD, now the world and my lusts have left me, and I feel myself ready to sink into eternal

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“ perdition, I lay hold upon thy mercy to deliver
 “ my soul from going down into the pit. I have
 “ heard strange things of thy goodness and that thou
 “ art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which
 “ I always trusted to, that after a long life of sin
 “ and vanity thou wouldst at last be pacified with
 “ a few penitent words and sighs at the hour of
 “ death. Let me not, I pray thee, be disappointed
 “ of this hope and put to confusion.”

Is this an address fit to be made to a wise man,
 much less to the all-wise and just judge of the world?
 and yet this seems to be the plain interpretation of
 the late and forc'd application of a great and ha-
 bitual sinner to almighty God in his last extremi-
 ty, and when he is just giving up the ghost and
 going to appear before his dreadful tribunal.

I say again, let no man deceive you with vain
 words or with vain hopes, or with false notions of a
 flight and sudden repentance: as if heaven were an
 hospital founded on purpose to receive all sick and
 maimed persons, that when they can live no longer
 to the lusts of the flesh and the sinful pleasures of
 this world, can but put up a cold and formal peti-
 tion to be admitted there.

No, no, as sure as God is true, they shall never
 see the kingdom of God, who instead of seeking
 it in the first place make it their last refuge and
 retreat: and when they find themselves under the
 sentence of death and damnation, only to avoid pre-
 sent execution, and since there is no other remedy,
 do at last bethink themselves of getting to heaven,
 and fall upon their knees to petition the great judge
 of the world that they may be transported thither.

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Can any man in reason expect that such a petition will be granted? I tell you nay; but except you repent sooner, and at a fitter time, and after a better fashion, you shall certainly perish. As much as God desires the salvation of men, he will not prostitute heaven, and set the gates of it wide open to those who only fly to it in extremity, but never sought it in good earnest, nor indeed do now care for it or desire it for any other reason, but to excuse them from going to hell. They have no value for heaven, because they are in no ways fit for it, but yet they think hell to be the worse place of the two.

The ever blessed God is himself abundantly sufficient for his own happiness, and does not need our company to make any addition to it: nor yet is heaven so desolate a place, or so utterly void of inhabitants, that like some newly discovered plantation it should be glad to receive the most vile and profligate persons, the scum and refuse of mankind. There are an innumerable company of glorious angels, much nobler creatures than the best of men, to people those blessed regions. "Thousands of thousands continually stand before God, and ten thousand times ten thousands minister unto him."

We do absolutely stand in need of God to make us happy, but he hath no need of us to help him to be so. God indeed is so good, as to desire our happiness as earnestly as if it were necessary to his own: but he is happy in and from himself, and without him it is impossible we should be happy, nay, we must of necessity be for ever miserable.

To

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To conclude; if we would have GOD to accept us in a dying hour, and our blessed SAVIOUR "to remember us now he is in his kingdom," let us think of him betimes, and "acquaint ourselves with him that we may be at peace: now before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when we shall say we have no pleasure in them."

"O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Which GOD of his infinite goodness grant that we may all seriously lay to heart, in this our day; and may learn betimes "so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom:" for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

THE
RULE of FAITH:

Or an ANSWER to the

TREATISE of Mr. J. S.

Entitled,

SURE-FOOTING, &c.

THE
RULE OF FAITH:

OR AN ANSWER TO THE

REMARKS OF MR. J. S.

Enchiridion

SURREFOOTING OF

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To my honoured and learned FRIEND

Dr. *STILLINGFLEET*.

S I R,

I Have, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, read over your book, which I find in every part answerable to its title, viz. A rational account of the grounds of the protestant religion. And now I thank you for it, not only as a private favour, but a publick benefit. No sooner had I perused it, but I met with a discourse entitled, Sure-footing in christianity. And although I have no small prejudice against books with conceited titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, because it pretended to contain animadversions on some passages in your book, which I had so lately read over. Upon perusal of which animadversions, I found that the author of them had attacked (and in his own opinion confuted) a page or two in your book. This drew me on to take a view of his main discourses: which, because they are in great vogue among some of his own party, and do with an unusual kind of confidence

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dence

dence and ostentation pretend to the newest and most exact fashion of writing controversy, as being all along demonstrative and built upon self-evident principles; therefore I resolved thoroughly to examine them, that I might discover (if I could) upon what so firm and solid foundations this high and mighty confidence was built.

But before I had entered upon this undertaking, I met with a letter from the author of sure-footing to his answerer, directing him how he ought to demean himself in his answer. In which letter, though there be many things liable to great exception, yet because I am unwilling to be diverted from the main question, I shall not argue with him about any of those matters; only take leave to use the same liberty in managing my answer, which he hath assumed to himself in prescribing laws to me about it: therefore, without taking any farther notice of his letter, I address myself to his book.

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART I.

The explication and state of the question.

SECT. I.

§. I. **T**HE question he propounds to himself The explication of the Terms of the Question. to debate, is, "What is the rule of
"faith?" In order to the resolution
whereof he endeavours,

First, to fix the true notion of these two terms, **RULE** and **FAITH**: which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reasonable, but I can by no means think his explication of those terms to be sufficient. He tells us, "That a
"rule is that which is able to regulate, or guide
"him that useth it:" in which description, as in many other passages of this book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr.* Whitby, that is, * P. 180.
"the confounding of a rule, by making Regulating
"and Guiding to be equivalent words." But for this I am no farther concerned than to take notice of it by the way: the fault which I find in this definition is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before; so that no man is the wiser for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a rule is. He pretends to tell Englishmen what a
6 L 2 rule

PART

I.

rule is; and for their clearer understanding of this word, he explains it by a word less removed from the latin, "a rule is that which is able to regulate him that useth it;" just as if a man should go about to explain what a lawgiver is, by saying, "he is one that hath the power of legislation." Of the two he had much better have said, that a rule is a thing that is able to rule him that useth it, though this be nothing but an explication of the same word by it self.

* P. 4.

§ 2. Not much better is his explication of the term faith, which he tells us, in the common sense of mankind, is the same with believing. * He declared indeed beforehand, "that he did not intend to give rigorous school-definitions of either this or the former word;" and (to do him right) he hath not in the least swerv'd from his intention. It were to be wish'd he had prefac'd some such thing to his demonstrations; for the reader will find, that they are not a whit more rigorous than his definitions; the latter of which doth very much resemble the country-man's way of defining, who being ask'd by his neighbour what an invasion was, after some study told him very gravely, "that an invasion was as if he should say an invasion." In like manner Mr. S. tells us, "that faith (or which is all one, belief) is the same with believing;" which, in my apprehension, is but a country definition, unless the interposing of those solemn words [in the common sense of mankind] may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. S. says in his * transition (as he calls it) where he gives the reader an account what

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* P. 159.

feats he hath done in his book: "he will see (says
"he) I take my rise at the meaning of the words
"Rule and Faith; this known, I establish my first
"principles in this present matter to be these, viz.
"a rule is a rule, faith is faith." This is the
right self-evident method he talks so much of, and
his principles agree admirably well with his defini-
tions. If he had but proceeded in the same me-
thod, and added, "that a rule of faith is a rule of
"faith; that oral tradition is oral tradition; and
"that to say, oral tradition is the rule of faith, is
"as much as to say oral tradition is the rule of
"faith," the whole business had been concluded
without any more ado; and I think no body would
have gone about to confute him.

§ 3. Rejecting then his way of definition as
inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a
man a clearer notion of things; I shall endeavour
to explain a little better (if I can) the meaning of
these terms.

A rule (when we speak of a rule of faith) is a
metaphorical word, which in its first and proper
sense, being applied to material and sensible things,
is the measure according to which we judge of
the straightness and crookedness of things; and from
hence it is transferred by analogy to things moral
or intellectual. A moral rule is the measure accord-
ing to which we judge whether a thing be good
or evil; and this kind of Rule is that which is com-
monly called a law, and the agreement or disagree-
ment of our actions to this rule, is suitably to the
metaphor, called rectitude or obliquity. An intel-
lectual rule is the measure according to which we
judge

PART

I.

judge whether a thing be true or false; and this is either general or more particular. Common notions, and the acknowledged principles of reason, are that general rule, according to which we judge whether a thing be true or false. The particular principles of every science are the more particular rules according to which we judge whether things in that science be true or false. So that the general notion of a rule is, that it is “a measure, by “the agreement or disagreement to which we judge “of all things of that kind to which it belongs.”

§ 4. Faith, though both among sacred and profane writers it be used many times more generally, for a persuasion or assent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a term of art used by divines, it signifies that particular kind of assent which is wrought in us by testimony or authority: so that divine faith, which we are now speaking of, is an assent to a thing upon the testimony or authority of God; or, which is all one, “an assent to a truth upon “divine revelation.”

§ 5. A rule of faith is the measure, according to which we judge what matters we are to assent to, as revealed to us by God, and what not. And more particularly, the rule of christian faith is the measure, according to which we are to judge what we ought to assent to, as the doctrine revealed by CHRIST to the world, and what not.

§ 6. So that this question, “What is the rule “of christian faith?” supposeth a doctrine revealed by CHRIST to the world; and that that doctrine was intelligibly and entirely delivered by CHRIST

to

to his apostles, and sufficient confirmation given to it; that this doctrine was in the same manner published to the world by the apostles, who likewise gave sufficient evidence of the truth of it. All this is necessarily supposed in the question: for it would be in vain to enquire whether this or that be the rule of christian faith, if such a thing as the christian faith were not first supposed. When therefore we enquire what is the rule of christian faith? the meaning of that enquiry is, by what way and means the knowledge of CHRIST's doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the distance of so many ages from the time of its first delivery: for this being known, we have the rule of faith; that is, a measure by which we may judge what we are to assent to, as the doctrine of CHRIST, and what not. So that when any question ariseth about any particular proposition, whether this be part of CHRIST's doctrine, we may be able by this rule to resolve it.

S E C T. II.

§ 1. **T**HE next thing to be considered, is his resolution of this question; by which we shall know what his opinion is concerning the rule of faith; for that being known, the controversy between us will easily be stated.

Mr. S's
rule of
faith.

His opinion in general is, that oral or practical tradition (in opposition to writing, or any other way that can be assigned) is the rule of faith. By oral or practical tradition, he means " * a delivery * P. 41.
" down from hand to hand (by words, and a constant course of frequent and visible actions, conformable

PART “formable to those words) of the sense and faith of
 I. “forefathers.”

§ 2. Now, that I may bring the controversy between us to a clear state, I am first to take a more particular view of his opinion concerning the rule of faith, that so I may the better understand how much he attributes to oral tradition, and what to the scriptures or written tradition. And then I am to lay down the protestant rule of faith, that so it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The sum of what he attributes to oral tradition, so far as can be collected out of so obscure and confused a discourse, may be reduced to these five heads.

§ 3. First, that the doctrine of christian religion was delivered by CHRIST to the apostles, and by them published to the world; and that the age which first received it from the apostles, delivered it as they received it without any change or corruption to their children, and they to theirs, and so it went on solely by this way of oral tradition. This is the sum of his explication of tradition, disc. 5th.

§ 4. Secondly, that this way alone is not only sufficient to convey this doctrine down to all ages certainly, and without any alteration; but it is the only possible way that can be imagined of conveying down a doctrine securely from one age to another. And this is the natural result of his discourse about the properties of a rule of faith: for if the true properties of the rule of faith do belong to oral tradition, then it is a sufficient means; and if those properties do solely and essentially appertain to it,
 and

and are incompatible to any thing else (as he endeavours to prove) then it is impossible there should be any other way.

§ 5. Thirdly, that it is impossible this means should fail or miss of its end; that is, the doctrine of CHRIST being once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither cease to descend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed in its descent. This is that which his demonstrations pretend to prove.

§ 6. Fourthly, that the infallibility of oral tradition, or the impossibility of its failing, is a first and self-evident principle. This he frequently asserts throughout his book.

§ 7. Fifthly, that this way of oral tradition hath *de facto* in all ages been acknowledged by christians, as the only way and means whereby the doctrine of christianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the consent of authority.

§ 8. As for the scriptures, he grants them indeed to have been written by men divinely inspired, and to contain a divine doctrine, even the same which is delivered by oral tradition; so he tells us, “ * ’Tis * P. 117
“ certain the apostles taught the same doctrine they
“ writ.” But then he denies it to be of any use without oral tradition, because neither the letter nor sense of it can without that be ascertained: so he saith in his letter to Dr. Casaubon, “ * As for * P. 137
“ the scriptures (ascertaining their letter and sense,
“ which is done by tradition) ’tis clear they are of
“ incomparable value; not only for the divine
“ doctrine contained in them, but also for many
“ particular passages, whose source or first attesta-
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“ tion not being universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by tradition.” Where, though he gives the scriptures very good words, it is to be understood, provided they will be subordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their sense and their being intelligible and useful to oral tradition. For if any man shall presume to say, that this book hath any certain sense without oral tradition, or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this book which he hath endited is so written, and doth not depend upon tradition for its sense and interpretation; then the most scurrilous language is not bad enough for the scriptures: then what are those sacred writings, but “ * ink variously figured in a book †, unsensed characters, waxen-natured words, not yet sensed, nor having any certain interpreter, but fit to be play’d upon diversly by quirks of wit? that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing.” These, with many other disgraceful terms, he very liberally bestows upon the divine oracles; the consideration whereof, did it not minister too much horror, would afford some comfort; for by this kind of rude usage, so familiar with him towards his adversaries, one may reasonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the scriptures among his friends.

* Append.
4th. pag.
319.
† P. 68.

§ 9. And whereas he saith, “ That the scriptures have preserved many particular passages, which, because their source or first attestation was not universal, nor their nature much practical, might possibly have been lost in their conveyance down by tradition;” this is impossible, according to his hypothesis :

pothesis: for if neither the scripture's letter, nor the certain sense of it, as to the main body of christian doctrine, could have been secured without oral tradition; that is, if we could not have known that those passages which contain the main points of CHRIST'S doctrine, either had been written by men divinely inspired, or what the sense of them was, but from the consonancy and agreement of those passages with the doctrine which was orally preached by the apostles; how can we be certain either of the letter or sense of other particular passages which must necessarily want this confirmation from oral tradition, because "their first attestation was not universal, nor their nature 'much practical?'" Nay, his discourse plainly implies, that we can have no security at all, either of the letter or sense of any other parts of scripture, but only those which are coincident with the main body of christian doctrine, as is evident from these words, " * Tradition established, the church is provided of a * P. 116. " certain and infallible rule to preserve a copy of the " scriptures letter truly significative of CHRIST'S " sense, as far as it is coincident with the main body " of christian doctrine preached at first;" because " sense writ in mens hearts by tradition, can easily " guide them to correct the alteration of the outward letter." This I perceive plainly is the thing they would be at, they would correct the outward letter of scripture by sense written in their hearts; and then, instead of leaving out the second commandment, they would change it into a precept of giving due worship to images, according to the council of Trent; and a thousand other alterations they must make in the bible, to make it truly significative of

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the sense of their church. But surely the outward letter of other passages of scripture, which were not intended to signify points of faith, is equally liable to alterations : and yet the church is not by tradition provided of any way to correct these alterations when they happen ; because tradition doth, as this corollary implies, only furnish the church with a certain and infallible rule of preserving a copy of the scriptures letter, so far as it is coincident with the main body of christian doctrine.

* P. 117. § 10. Again, he tells us, “ * Tradition established, “ the church is provided of a certain and infallible “ rule to interpret scripture-letter by, so as to arrive “ certainly at CHRIST’s sense, as far as the letter concerns the body of christian doctrine preached at “ first, or points requisite to salvation.” So that whatever he may attribute to scripture for fashion’s sake, and to avoid calumny with the vulgar, as he says very ingenuously in his explication of the 15th corollary ; nevertheless ’tis plain, that according to his own hypothesis, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly useless and pernicious. That ’tis altogether useless, according to his hypothesis, is plain ; for the main body of christian doctrine is securely conveyed to us without it, and it can give no kind of confirmation to it, because it receives all its confirmation from it ; only the church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition and sense written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of scripture which are not coincident with the main body of christian doctrine, we can have no certainty either that the outward letter is true ; nor, if we could, can

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P. 40.

P. 63.

Apology
for tradi-
tion, pag.
165.

we possibly arrive at any certain sense of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious, according to his hypothesis, is plain, because “* every silly and upstart here-
“ sy fathers itself upon it;” and when men leave tradition (as he supposeth all hereticks do) the scripture is the most dangerous engine that could have been invented, being to such persons only “* waxen-natur’d.
“ words, not sensed, nor having any certain inter-
“ preter; but fit to be play’d upon diversly by quirks
“ of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but
“ to clear little or nothing.” And indeed, if his hypothesis were true, the scriptures might well deserve all the contemptuous language which he useth against them; and * Mr. White’s comparison of them
with Lilly’s almanack, would not only be pardon-
able, but proper; and (unless he added it out of pru-
dence, and for the peoples sake, whom he may think too superstitiously conceited of those books) he might have spared that cold excuse which he makes for using this similitude, “that it was agreeable rather to the
“ impertinency of the objection than the dignity of
“ the subject.” Certain it is, if these men are true to their own principles, that notwithstanding the high reverence and esteem pretended to be born by them and their church to the scriptures, they must heartily despise them, and wish them out of the way: and even look upon it as a great oversight of the divine providence to trouble his church with a book, which, if their discourse be of any consequence, can stand catholicks in no stead at all, and is so dangerous and mischievous a weapon in the hands of hereticks.

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The RULE of FAITH.

S E C T. III.

The protestant doctrine concerning the rule of faith.

§ 1. **H**AVING thus taken a view of his opinion, and considered how much he attributes to oral tradition, and how little to the scriptures; before I assail his hypothesis, I shall lay down the protestant rule of faith; not that so much is necessary for the answering of his book, but that he may have no colour of objection, that I proceed altogether in the destructive way, and overthrow his principle, as he calls it, without substituting another in its room. The opinion then of the protestants concerning the rule of faith, is this in general, that those books which we call the holy scriptures, are the means whereby the christian doctrine hath been brought down to us. And that he may now clearly understand this, together with the grounds of it (which in reason he ought to have done before he had forsaken us) I shall declare more particularly in these following propositions.

§ 2. First, that the doctrine of christian religion was by CHRIST delivered to the apostles, and by them first preached to the world, and afterwards by them committed to writing; which writings, or books, have been transmitted from one age to another down to us: so far I take to be granted by our present adversaries. That the christian doctrine was by CHRIST delivered to the apostles, and by them published to the world, is part of their own hypothesis. That this doctrine was afterwards by the apostles committed to writing, he also grants, corol. 29. “* ’Tis cer-

* P. 117. tain the apostles taught the same doctrine they

“writ;”

“ writ ;” and if so, it must be as certain that they writ the same doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general tenet of the papists, that the scriptures do not contain the entire body of christian doctrine, but that besides the doctrines contained in scripture, there are also others brought down to us by oral or unwritten tradition. But Mr. S. who supposeth the whole doctrine of christian religion to be certainly conveyed down to us solely by oral tradition, doth not any where, that I remember, deny that all the same doctrine is contained in the scriptures ; only he denies the scriptures to be a means sufficient to convey this doctrine to us with certainty, so that we can by them be infallibly assured what is CHRIST’s doctrine, and what not. Nay, he seems in that passage I last cited to grant this, in saying that the apostles did both teach and write the same doctrine. I am sure Mr. White (whom he follows very closely through his whole book) does not deny this, in his apology for tradition ; where he saith, “ * that it is not the catholic position, that all its doctrines are not contained in the scriptures.” And that those writings or books which we call the holy scriptures, have been transmitted down to us, is unquestionable matter of fact, and granted universally by the papists, as to all those books which are owned by protestants for canonical. S E C T.
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P. 171.

§ 3. Secondly, that the way of writing is a sufficient means to convey a doctrine to the knowledge of those who live in times very remote from the age of its first delivery. According to his hypothesis, there is no possible way of conveying a doctrine with certainty and security besides that of oral tradition ; the
falshood

PART falshood of which will sufficiently appear, when I
II. shall have shewn, that the true properties of a rule
 of faith do agree to the scriptures, and not to oral
 tradition. In the mean time I shall only offer this to
 his consideration, that whatever can be orally de-
 livered in plain and intelligible words, may be writ-
 ten in the same words; and that a writing or book
 which is publick, and in every one's hand, may be
 conveyed down with at least as much certainty and
 security, and with as little danger of alteration, as
 an oral tradition. And if so, I understand not what
 can render it impossible for a book to convey down
 a doctrine to the knowledge of after-ages. Besides,
 if he had looked well about him, he could not but
 have apprehended some little inconvenience in mak-
 ing that an essential part of his hypothesis, which is
 contradicted by plain and constant experience: for
 that any kind of doctrine may be sufficiently conveyed,
 by books, to the knowledge of after-ages, provided
 those books be but written intelligibly, and preserved
 from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both
 which I shall be so bold as to suppose possible) is as little
 doubted by the generality of mankind, as that there
 are books. And surely we christians cannot think it
 impossible to convey a doctrine to posterity by books,
 when we consider that God himself pitched upon this
 way for conveyance of the doctrine of the jewish re-
 ligion to after-ages; because it is not likely that so
 wise an agent should pitch upon a means whereby it
 was impossible he should attain his end.

§. 4. Thirdly, that the books of scripture are
 sufficiently plain, as to all things necessary to be be-
 lieved and practised. He that denies this, ought in
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reason to instance in some necessary point of faith, or matter of practice, which is not in some place of scripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a sufficient objection to say, “ * that the greatest
“ wits among the protestants differ about the sense
“ of those texts, wherein the generality of them
“ suppose the divinity of CHRIST to be plainly
“ and clearly expressed;” because, if nothing were to be accounted sufficiently plain, but what it is impossible a great wit should be able to wrest to any other sense, not only the scriptures but all other books, and (which is worst of all to him that makes this objection) all oral tradition would fall into uncertainty. Doth the traditionary church pretend that the doctrine of CHRIST’s divinity is conveyed down to her by oral tradition more plainly than it is expressed in scripture? I would fain know what plainer words she ever used to express this point of faith by, than what the scripture useth, which expressly calls him “ GOD, the true GOD, GOD over
“ all, blessed for evermore.” If it be said, that those who deny the divinity of CHRIST have been able to evade these and all other texts of scripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the church in that matter; it is easily answered, that the same arts would equally have eluded both; but there was no reason why they should trouble themselves so much about the latter; for why should they be solicitous to wrest the definitions of councils, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the church’s authority? if those great wits (as he calls them) had believed the sayings of scripture to be of no greater authority than the de-

PART. finitions of councils, they would have answered texts of
I. scripture, as they have done the definitions of councils ;
 not by endeavouring to interpret them to another sense,
 but by downright denying their authority. So that
 it seems that oral tradition is liable to the same in-
 convenience with the written, as to this particular.

§. 5. And of this I shall give him a plain instance
 in two great wits of their church, the present pope,
 and Mr. White ; the one the head of the traditiona-
 ry church, as Mr. S. calls it ; the other the great
 master of the traditionary doctrine. These two great
 wits, the pope and Mr. White, notwithstanding
 the plainness of oral tradition, and the impossibility
 of being ignorant of it, or mistaking it, have yet
 been so unhappy as to differ about several points of
 faith ; insomuch that Mr. White is unkindly cen-
 sured for it at Rome, and perhaps here in England
 the pope speeds no better ; however, the difference
 continues still so wide, that Mr. White hath thought
 fit to disobey the summons of his chief pastor, and
 like a prudent man, rather to write against him here
 out of harm's way, than to venture the infallibility
 of plain oral tradition for the doctrines he maintains,
 against a practical tradition which they have at Rome
 of killing hereticks.

Methinks Mr. S. might have spared his brags,
 " that he hath evinced from clear reason, * that it is
 " far more impossible to make a man not to be,
 " than not to know what is riveted into his soul
 " by so oft repeated sensations, (as the christian faith
 " is by oral and practical tradition) and that it ex-
 " ceeds all the power of nature (abstracting from the
 " cases of madness and violent disease) to blot
 " know-

“ knowledge, thus fix’d, out of the soul of one
 “ single believer; infomuch, that sooner may all
 “ mankind perish, than the regulative virtue of
 “ tradition miscarry; nay, sooner may the sinews of
 “ entire nature, by overstraining, crack, and she
 “ lose all her activity and motion, that is, herself,
 “ than one single part of that innumerable multi-
 “ tude which integrate the vast testification, which
 “ we call tradition, can possibly be violated;” when
 after he hath told us, “ * that the city of Rome
 “ was blest with more vigorous causes to imprint * P. 116.
 “ CHRIST’s doctrine at first, and recommend it
 “ to the next age, than were found any where else;
 “ and consequently that the stream of tradition, in
 “ its source and first putting into motion, was
 “ more particularly vigorous there than in any other
 “ see; and that the chief pastor of that see hath a
 “ particular title to infallibility built upon tradition,
 “ above any other pastor whatsoever; not to dilate
 “ on the particular assistances to that bishop, spring-
 “ ing out of his divinely constituted office:” when,
 I say, after all this quaint reasoning and rumbling
 rhetorick about the infallibility of oral tradition,
 and the particular infallibility of the bishop of
 Rome built on tradition, we cannot but remember,
 that this great oracle of oral tradition the pope, and
 this great master of it Mr. White, who is so pecu-
 liarly skill’d in the rule of faith, have so manifest-
 ly declar’d themselves to differ in points of
 faith. For that the pope and his congregation ge-
 neral at Rome, have condemn’d all his books for
 this reason, because “ * they contain several propo-
 “ sitions manifestly heretical,” is a sign that these
 * Mr. Wh.
 Extasiz
 P. 9.

PART. two great wits do not very well hit it in matters of
 I. faith; and either that they do not both agree in
 the same rule of faith, or that one of them does
 not rightly understand it, or not follow it. And
 now, why may not that which Mr. S. unjustly says
 concerning the use of scripture, be upon this account
 justly applied to the business of oral tradition?

P. 39. " * If we see two such eminent wits among the papists
 " (the pope and Mr. White) making use of the self-
 " same, and as they conceive, the best advantages
 " their rule of faith gives them; and availing them-
 " selves the best they can by acquired skill, yet dif-
 " fer about matters of faith; what certainty can we
 " undertakingly promise to weaker heads, that is, to
 " the generality of the papists," in whom the go-
 vernors of the church do professedly cherish igno-
 rance for the increasing of their devotion?

§ 6. Fourthly, we have sufficient assurance that the
 books of scripture are conveyed down to us without
 any material corruption or alteration. And he that
 denies this, must either reject the authority of all
 books, because we cannot be certain whether they
 be the same now that they were at first; or else,
 give some probable reason why these should be more
 liable to corruption than others. But any man that
 considers things, will easily find that it is much
 more improbable that these books should have been
 either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted, in any
 thing material to faith or a good life, than any
 other books in the world; whether we consi-
 der the peculiar providence of God engaged for
 the preservation of them, or the peculiar circum-
 stances of these books. If they were written by men
 divinely

divinely inspired, and are of use to christians, as is acknowledged (at least in words) on all hands, nothing is more credible, than that the same divine providence which took care for the publishing of them, would likewise be concerned to preserve them entire. And if we consider the peculiar circumstances of these books, we shall find it morally impossible that they should have been materially corrupted, because being of universal and mighty concernment, and at first diffused into many hands, and soon after translated into most languages, and most passages in them cited in books now extant, and all these now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great assurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not suffered any material alteration, and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral tradition, as I shall shew when I come to answer the thing which he calls demonstration.

§. 7. Fifthly, that *de facto* the scripture hath been acknowledged by all christians, in former ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of CHRIST hath with greatest certainty been conveyed to them. One good evidence of this is, that the primitive adversaries of christian religion did always look upon the scripture as the standard and measure of the christian doctrine, and in all their writing against christianity, took that for granted to be the christian faith which was contained in those books; there having not as yet any philosopher risen up who had demonstrated to the world, that a doctrine could not, with sufficient certainty and clearness, be conveyed by writing from one age to another. But how absurd

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furd had this method of confuting christian religion been, if it had been then the publick profession of christians that the scriptures were not the rule of their faith? How easy had it been for the fathers, who apologized for, and defended christian religion, to have told them they took a wrong measure for their doctrine; for it was not the principle of christians, that their faith was conveyed to them by the scriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their religion that way; but if they would effectually argue against it, they ought to enquire what that doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to son, without which the scriptures could signify no more to them than an unknown cipher without a key; being of themselves, without the light of oral tradition, only an heap of unintelligible words, “unsensed characters, and ink variously figured in a book;” and therefore it was a gross mistake in them, to think they could understand the christian religion (like their own philosophy) by reading of those books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the fathers might have defended their religion; nay they ought in all reason to have taken this course, and to have appealed from those dead senseless books to the true rule of faith, the living voice of the church essential. But doth Mr. S. find any thing to this purpose in the apologies of the fathers? if he hath discovered any such matter, he might do well to acquaint the world with it, and make them wiser; in the mean time, I shall inform him what I have found, that the fathers never except against that method, but appeal frequently from the slanderous reports and misrepresentations which

which were made of their doctrine, to the books of scripture, as the true standard of it.

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§ 8. Another evidence that christians in all ages since the apostles times, have owned the scriptures for the rule of their faith, is, that the fathers, in their homilies, did use constantly to declare to the people what they were to believe, and what they were to practise out of the scriptures; which had been most absurd and senseless, had they believed not the scriptures but something else to have been the rule of faith and manners. For what could tend more to the seducing of the people from Mr. S's supposed rule of faith, oral tradition, than to make a daily practice of declaring and confirming the doctrines of the christian faith from the scriptures? had the ancient fathers been right for Mr. S's way, they would not have built their doctrine upon scripture; perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the people an occasion to grow familiar with so dangerous a book; but rather (as their more prudent posterity have done) would have locked it up from the people in an unknown tongue, and have set open the stores of good wholsom traditions; and instead of telling them (as they do most frequently) "thus saith the scripture," would only have told them, "this is the voice of the essential church; thus it hath been delivered down by hand to us from our forefathers."

§ 9. I might add for a third evidence, the great malice of the enemies and persecutors of christianity against this book, and their cruel endeavours to extort it out of the hands of christians, and destroy it out of the world, that by this means they might
extirpate

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extirpate Christianity. For it seems they thought, that the abolishing of this book would have been the ruin of that religion. But (according to Mr. S's opinion) their malice wanted wit; for had all the bibles in the world been burn'd, christian religion would nevertheless have been entirely preserv'd, and safely transmitted down to us by sense written in mens hearts, with the good help of Mr. S's demonstrations. Nay, their church would have been a great gainer by it; for this occasion and parent of all heresy the scripture being once out of the way, she might have had all in her own hands, and by leading the people in the safe paths of tradition, and consequently of science, might have made them wise enough to obey. Well, but suppose the persecutors of christianity mistook themselves in their design, how came the christians in those days to be so tenacious of this book, that rather than deliver it, they would yield up themselves to torments and death? and why did they look upon those who out of fear delivered up their books, as apostates and renouncers of christianity? and if they had not thought this book to be the great instrument of their faith and salvation, and if it had really been of no greater consideration than Mr. W. and Mr. S. would make it; why should they be so loth to part with a few "unsens'd characters, waxen-natur'd words, to be play'd upon diversly by quirks of wit, that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing?" Why should they value their lives at so cheap a rate as to throw them away for a few insignificant scrawls, and to shed their blood for "a little ink variously figured in

“ in a book ? ” Did they not know, that the safety of christianity did not depend upon this book ? Did no christian then understand that, which (according to Mr. S.) no christian can be ignorant of, viz. that not the scripture, but unmistakable and indefectible oral tradition was the rule of faith ? why did they not consider, that though this letter-rule of hereticks had been consumed to ashes, yet their faith would have lain safe, “ and been preserved “ entire in its * spiritual causes, mens minds, the * P. 341 “ noblest pieces in nature ? ” Some of them indeed did deliver up their books, and were called *traditores*, and I have some ground to believe, that these were the only traditionary christians of that time, and that the rest were confessors and martyrs for the letter-rule. And if this be not evidence enough, that the scriptures have always been acknowledged by christians for the rule of faith, I shall, when I come to examine his testimonies for tradition (with the good leave of his distinction between speculators and testifiers) prove by most express testimony, that it was the general opinion of the fathers, “ that the “ scriptures are the rule of christian faith ; ” and then, if his demonstration of the infallibility of tradition will enforce, that as testifiers they must needs have spoken otherwise, who can help it ?

S E C T. IV.

§ 1. **H**AVING thus laid down the protestant rule of faith, with the grounds of it ; all that now remains for me to do towards the clear and full stating

How much protestants allow to oral tradition.

PART I. stating of the controversy between us, is to take notice briefly, and with due limitations,

First, how much the protestants do allow to oral tradition.

Secondly, what those things are which Mr. S. thinks fit to attribute to his rule of faith, which we see no cause to attribute to ours: and when this is done, any one may easily discern how far we differ.

§ 2. First, how much protestants do allow to oral tradition.

1. We grant that oral tradition, in some circumstances, may be a sufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but withal we deny, that such circumstances are now in being. In the first ages of the world, when the *credenda* or articles of religion, and the *agenda* or precepts of it were but few, and such as had the evidence of natural light; when the world was contracted into a few families in comparison, and the age of men ordinarily extended to six or seven hundred years; it is easy to imagine, how such a doctrine, in such circumstances, might have been propagated by oral tradition, without any great change or alterations. Adam lived till Methuselah was above two hundred years old, Methuselah lived till Sem was near an hundred, and Sem outlived Abraham: so that this tradition need not pass through more than two hands betwixt Adam and Abraham. But though this way was sufficient to have preserved religion in the world, if men had not been wanting to themselves; yet we find it did not prove effectual: for through the corruption and negligence of men after the flood (if not before) when the world began to

to multiply, and the age of man was shortned, the knowledge and worship of the one true God was generally lost in the world. And so far as appears by scripture-history (the only record we have of those times) when God called out Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, the whole world was lapsed into polytheism and idolatry. Therefore, for the greater security of religion afterwards, when the posterity of Abraham was multiplied into a great nation, the wisdom of God did not think fit to intrust the doctrine of religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of tradition, but committed it to writing. Now that God pitched upon this way, after the world had sadly experienced the unsuccessfulness of the other, seems to be a very good evidence that this was the better and more secure way; it being the usual method of the divine dispensations not to go backwards, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is less perfect to that which is more. And the apostle's * reasoning concerning the two covenants, is very applicable to these two methods of conveying the doctrine of religion; "if the first had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second."

* Hebr.
viii. 7.

§ 3. So likewise, when CHRIST revealed his doctrine to the world, it was not in his life-time committed to writing; because it was entertained but by a few, who were his disciples and followers, and who, so long as he continued with them, had a living oracle to teach them. After his death, the apostles, who were to publish this doctrine to the world, were assisted by an infallible spirit, so as they were secured from error and mistake in the delivery of it. But

PART when this extraordinary assistance failed, there was
 I. need of some other means to convey it to posterity, that so it might be a fixed and standing rule of faith and manners to the end of the world. To this end the providence of God took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. S. may see this is not a conjecture of protestants, but the sense of former times, I shall refer him to St. Chrysostom (*homil. 1. in Matth.*) who tells us, "That CHRIST left nothing in writing to his apostles, but instead thereof did promise to bestow upon them the grace of his HOLY SPIRIT, saying, John xiv. He shall bring all things to your remembrance, &c. But because in progress of time there were many grievous miscarriages both in matter of opinion, and also of life and manners; therefore it was requisite that the memory of doctrine should be preserved by writing." So long then as the apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of oral tradition was secure, but no longer; nor even then, from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and supernatural assistance which accompanied the deliverers.

§ 4. And therefore it is no good way of argument against the way of tradition by writing, which he lays so much weight upon, * "That the apostles and their successors went not with books in their hands to preach and deliver CHRIST's doctrine, but words in their mouths; and that primitive antiquity learned their faith by another method, a long time before many of those books were universally spread among the vulgar." For what if there was no need of writing this doctrine, whilst those living oracles

* P. 40.

oracles the apostles were present with the church? SECT. IV. doth it therefore follow that there was no need afterwards when the apostles were dead, and that extraordinary and supernatural assistance was ceased? If the preachers now-a-days could give us any such assurance, and confirm all they preach by such frequent, and publick, and unquestionable miracles as the apostles did; then we need not examine the doctrines they taught by any other rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they delivered to us: but seeing this is not the case, that ought in all reason to be the rule of our faith, which hath brought down to us the doctrine of CHRIST with the greatest certainty; and this I shall prove the scriptures to have done.

§ 5. So that in those circumstances I have mentioned, we allow oral tradition to have been a sufficient way of conveying a doctrine; but now considering the great increase of mankind, and the shortness of man's life in these latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the apostles age down to us, and the innumerable accidents whereby in the space of 1500 years, oral tradition might receive insensible alterations, so as at last to become quite another thing from what it was at first, by passing through many hands; in which passage all the mistakes and corruptions which (in the several ages through which it was transmitted) did happen, either through ignorance, or forgetfulness, or out of interest and design, are necessarily derived into the last: so that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; because as it passeth along, more errors and corruptions are infused into it. I say, considering all this, we deny, that the doctrine of christian religion could,

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could, with any probable security and certainty, have been conveyed down to us by the way of oral tradition ; and therefore do reasonably believe, that God foreseeing this, did in his wisdom so order things, that those persons who were assisted by an infallible spirit in the delivery of this doctrine, should, before they left the world, commit it to writing ; which was accordingly done : and by this instrument the doctrine of faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§ 6. Secondly, we allow, that tradition oral and written, do give us sufficient assurance that the books of scripture which we now have, are the very books which were written by the apostles and evangelists : nay farther, that oral tradition alone is a competent evidence in this case ; but withal we deny, that oral tradition is therefore to be accounted the rule of faith.

The general assurance that we have concerning books written long ago, that they are so ancient, and were written by those whose names they bear, is a constant and uncontroll'd tradition of this, transmitted from one age to another ; partly orally, and partly by the testimony of other books. Thus much is common to scripture with other books. But then the scriptures have this peculiar advantage above other books, that being of a greater and more universal concernment, they have been more common and in every body's hands, more read and studied than any other books in the world whatsoever ; and consequently, they have a more universal and better-grounded attestation. Moreover, they have not only been owned universally in all ages by christians (except three or four books of them, which for some time were questioned by some churches, but have since

since been generally received) but the greatest enemies of our religion, the jews and heathens, never questioned the antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very books which the apostles writ. And this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any antient book, without a particular and immediate revelation.

§ 7. And this concession doth not, as Mr. S. supposeth, make oral tradition to be finally the rule of faith; for the meaning of this question, (‘‘ What is ‘‘ the rule of faith?’’) is, what is the next and immediate means whereby the knowledge of CHRIST’S doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although oral tradition be the means whereby we come to know that these are the books of scripture, yet these books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know what is CHRIST’S doctrine, and consequently what we are to believe.

§ 8. Nor doth this concession make oral tradition to be the rule of faith, by a parity of reason; as if because we acknowledge that oral tradition alone can with competent certainty transmit a book to after-ages, we must therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a doctrine consisting of several articles of faith (nay, very many, as Mr. White acknowledges *) and many laws and precepts of life: so be-
 * Rushw. dial. 4. sect. 9.
 cause oral tradition sufficiently assures us that this is *magna charta*, and that the statute-book, in which are contained those laws which it concerns every man to be skilful in; therefore, by like parity of reason, it must follow, that tradition itself is better than a book, even the best way imaginable to convey down such laws to us. Mr. S. saith * expressly it is; but * P. 23.
 how

PART how truly, I appeal to experience, and the wisdom
I. of our lawgivers, who seem to think otherwise. Tradition is already defined to us, "a delivery down
 "from hand to hand of the sense and faith of
 "forefathers," i. e. of the gospel or message of **CHRIST**. Now suppose any oral message, consisting of an hundred particularities, were to be delivered to an hundred several persons of different degrees of understanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to an hundred more, who were to convey it to others, and so onwards to a hundred descents; is it probable this message, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through so many mouths, as if it were written down in so many letters, concerning which every bearer should need to say no more than this, that it was delivered to him as a letter written by him whose name was subscribed to it? I think it not probable, though the mens lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his errand or letter. For the letter is a message which no man can mistake in, unless he will; but the errand so difficult and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager against every one of the messengers, that he either forgets, or mistakes something in it; it is ten thousand to one, that the first hundred do not all agree in it; is is a million to one, that the next succession do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the hundred mistook or forgot any thing, it is then impossible that he that received it from him should deliver it right; and so the farther it goes, the greater change it is liable to. Yet after all this I do not say, but it may be demonstrated in Mr. S's way, to have more of certainty in it than the original letter.

§ 9. Thirdly,

§. 9. Thirdly, we allow, that the doctrine of christian religion hath in all ages been preached to the people by the pastors of the church, and taught by christian parents to their children; but with great difference, by some more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others with less care and exactness, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in pastors or parents; and likewise with very different success, according to the different capacities and dispositions of the learners. We allow likewise, that there hath been a constant course of visible actions, conformable, in some measure, to the principles of christianity; but then we say, that those outward acts and circumstances of religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by the addition to them, and defalcation from them in several ages. That this not only is possible, but hath actually happened, I shall shew when I come to answer his demonstration. Now, that several of the main doctrines of faith contained in the scripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practised by christians in all ages (as the articles summed up in the apostles creed, the use of the two sacraments) is a good evidence so far, that the scriptures contain the doctrine of christian religion. But then, if we consider how we come to know that such points of faith have been taught, and such external actions practised in all ages, it is not enough to say, there is a present multitude of christians that profess to have received such doctrines as ever believed and practised, and from hence to infer that they were so; the inconsequence of which argument I shall have a better occasion to

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shew afterwards: but he that will prove this to any man's satisfaction, must make it evident from the best monuments and records of several ages, that is, from the most authentick books of those times, that such doctrines have in all those ages been constantly and universally taught and practised. But then if from those records of former times it appear that other doctrines, not contained in scriptures, were not taught and practised universally in all ages, but have crept in by degrees, some in one age, and some in another, according as ignorance and superstition in the People, ambition and interest in the chief pastors of the church, have ministred occasion and opportunity; and that the innovators of these doctrines and practices, have all along pretended to confirm them out of scripture, as the acknowledg'd rule of faith; and have likewise acknowledged the books of scripture to have descended without any material corruption or alteration (all which will sufficiently appear in the process of my discourse) then cannot the oral and practical tradition of the present church, concerning any doctrine, as ever believed and practised, which hath no real foundation in scripture, be any argument against these books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the christian doctrine. And to say the scripture is to be interpreted by oral and practical tradition, is no more reasonable than it would be to interpret the ancient books of the law, by the present practice of it; which every one, that compares things fairly together, must acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient law.

S E C T.

S E C T. V.

§. 1. *2dly*, **H**OW much more he attributes to his rule of faith, than we think fit to attribute to ours. How much Mr. S. attributes to his Rule of Faith, more than Protestants to theirs.

1. We do not say, that it is impossible, in the nature of the thing that this rule should fail, that is, either that these books should cease to descend, or should be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, because there is no need we should. We believe the providence of God will take care of them, and secure them from being either lost or materially corrupted; yet we think it very possible that all the books in the world may be burn'd or otherwise destroyed. All that we affirm concerning our rule of faith, is, that it is abundantly sufficient (if men be not wanting to themselves) to convey the christian doctrine to all successive ages; and we think him very unreasonable that expects that God should do more than what is abundantly enough, for the perpetuating of christian religion in the world.

§. 2. Secondly, nor do we say that that certainty and assurance which we have, that these books are the same that were written by the apostles, is a first and self-evident principle: but only that it is a truth capable of evidence sufficient, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. S. may, if he please, say that tradition's certainty is a first and self-evident principle; but then he that says this, should take heed how he takes upon him to demonstrate it. Aristotle was so wise as never to

PART. demonstrate first principles, for which he gives this
 I. very good reason, because they cannot be demonstrated. And most prudent men are of opinion, that a self-evident principle, of all things in the world should not be demonstrated, because it needs not: for to what purpose should a man write a book to prove that which every man must assent to without any proof, so soon as it is propounded to him? I have always taken a self-evident principle to be such a proposition, as having in it self-sufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing else. If I be herein mistaken, I desire Mr. S. to inform me better.

§ 3. So that the true state of the controversy between us, is, whether oral and practical tradition, in opposition to writing and books, be the only way and means whereby the doctrine of CHRIST can with certainty and security be conveyed down to us, who live at this distance from the age of CHRIST and his apostles: this he affirms, and the protestants deny, not only that it is the sole means, but that it is sufficient for the certain conveyance of this doctrine; and withal affirm, that this doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the books of holy scripture, as the proper measure and standard of our religion: but then they do not exclude oral tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain knowledge of these books; nor do they exclude the authentick records of former ages, nor the constant teaching and practice of this doctrine, from being subordinate means and helps of conveying it from one age to another; nay, so far
 are

are they from excluding these concurrent means, that they suppose them always to have been used, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this doctrine, so far as they have been truly subordinate to, and regulated by these sacred oracles, the holy scriptures, which, they say, do truly and fully contain that doctrine which CHRIST delivered to his apostles, and they preached to the world. To illustrate this by an instance: suppose there were a controversy now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true art of logick which Aristotle taught his scholars; and some should be of opinion, that the only way to know this would be by oral tradition from his scholars; which we might easily understand by consulting those of the present age, who learned it from those who received it from them, who at last had it from Aristotle himself: but others should think it the surest way to study his organon, a book acknowledged by all his scholars to have been written by himself, and to contain that doctrine which he taught them. They who take this latter course, suppose the authority of oral tradition for the conveying to them the knowledge of this book; and do suppose this doctrine to have been taught and practised in all ages, and a great many books to have been written by way of comment and explication of this doctrine; and that these have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough suppose all this, and yet be of opinion that the truest measure and standard of Aristotle's doctrine is his own book; and that it would

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IV.

would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his book, either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious sense of his words, to go about to reconcile this book with that method of disputing which is used by the professed aristotelians of the present age, and with all that scholastick jargon which Mr. S. learned at Lisbon, and has made him so great a man in the science of all controversy, as even to enable him to demonstrate first and self-evident principles, a trick not to be learned out of Aristotle's organon. The application is so easy, that I need not make it.

THE

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART II.

*Concerning the properties of the Rule of Faith;
and whether they agree solely to oral tra-
dition.*

SECT. I.

§ 1. **H**AVING thus endeavoured to bring the con- SECT.
I.
troverſy between us to its clear and true
ſtate, that ſo we might not quarrel in the dark,
and diſpute about we know not what; I come now
to grapple more cloſely with his book. And the
main foundations of his diſcourſe may be reduced to
theſe three heads:

First, that the eſſential properties of ſuch a way
and means as can with certainty and ſecurity con-
vey down to us the doctrine of CHRIST, belong
ſolely to oral tradition. This he endeavours to prove
in his five firſt diſcourſes.

Secondly, that it is impoſſible that this way of
oral tradition ſhould fail. And this he pretends to
prove in his four laſt diſcourſes.

Thirdly, that oral tradition hath been generally
reputed by chriſtians in all ages, the ſole way and
means of conveying down to them the doctrines of
CHRIST.

PART CHRIST.

II.

And this he attempts to shew in his last chapter, which he calls, "The consent of authority to the substance of his foregoing discourses." If he make good these three things, he hath acquitted himself well in his undertaking; but whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined.

§ 2. First, whether the essential properties of such a way and means as can with certainty and security convey down to us the knowledge of CHRIST's doctrine, belong solely to oral tradition?

The true way to measure the essential properties of this or that means, is by considering its sufficiency for its end: for whatsoever is necessary to make any means sufficient for the obtaining of its end, is to be reputed an essential property of that means, and nothing else. Now, because the end we are speaking of is the conveyance of the knowledge of CHRIST's doctrine to all those who are concerned to know it, in such a manner as they may be sufficiently certain and secure that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was first delivered. From hence it appears, that the means to this end, must have these two properties: 1st, It must be sufficiently plain and intelligible. 2dly, It must be sufficiently certain to us, that is, such as we may be fully satisfied concerning it, that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have these two conditions, it is sufficient for its end; but if it want either of them, it must necessarily fall short of its end: for if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot

cannot be assur'd, that that doctrine which it brings S E C T.
I.
down to us for the doctrine of CHRIST, is really
such.

§ 3. I know he assigns more properties of this means, which he calls the Rule of Faith; but upon examination it will appear, that they either fall in with these two, or do not at all belong to it: as,

First, "That * it must be plain and self-evident * P. 11.
"to all, as to its existence." Nothing can be more frivolous, than to make this a property of any thing; because whosoever enquires into the properties of a thing, is supposed to be already satisfied that the thing is.

Secondly, "That it be † evidenceable, as to its † P. 11.
"ruling power;" that is, as he explains himself,
" * that men be capable of knowing, that it de- * P. 3.
"serves to be relied on as a rule." By which he must either understand the certainty of it: and then it falls in with the second property I mentioned, and is the same with the sixth which he lays down; or else he means more generally, that it is the property of a rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the properties of a rule: for I understand not how a man can know that any thing deserves to be relied on as a rule, otherwise than by knowing it hath the properties of a rule, that is, that it is sufficient for its end. But at this rate a man may multiply the properties of things without end, if the evidence of a thing, as to its existence, be one property; and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is such a thing, be another.

PART

II.

* P. 12.

§ 4. Thirdly, “that it be * apt to settle and “justify undoubting persons.” What he means here by settling undoubting persons, I am not able, on a sudden, to comprehend, because I understand not what unsettles a man besides doubting; for if a man be but so well satisfied about any thing as to have no doubt concerning it, I do not easily apprehend how he can be settled better; that is, how his mind can be more at rest than not to doubt. But if by undoubting persons he means those who do not doubt for the present, but afterwards may doubt, then I perceive what he means by apt to settle undoubting persons, viz. apt to settle persons when they do doubt, that is, when they are not undoubting persons. As for justifying undoubting persons, if he means that whosoever securely relies on this rule ought of right to be acquitted, as acting rationally in so doing; this is plainly consequent upon the two properties I have laid down: for if the means of conveying CHRIST’S doctrine be sufficiently plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is justified in so doing, because he trusts a means which is sufficient for its end.

* P. 12.

§ 5. Fourthly, “that * it be apt to satisfy fully “the most sceptical dissenters and rational doubters.” For its aptitude to satisfy rational doubters, that plainly follows from the sufficient certainty of it; but why it should be a necessary property of a rule of faith, to be apt to satisfy the most sceptical dissenter, I can no more divine, than I can, why he should call a dissenter sceptical, which are repugnant terms: for a sceptick is one who neither assents to any thing, nor dissents; but is in a perpetual suspense,

suspense, because he looks upon every opinion, as ^{SECT. I.} balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability, without any inclination of the scales either way. But if by the most sceptical dissenter he means only a sceptick, one that doth not believe the doctrine of CHRIST, nor any thing else; then I would fain know what that is which in reason is apt fully to satisfy such a person. If any thing will, sure a demonstration will; but there is no aptitude at all in a demonstration, to satisfy him who doubts whether there be any such thing as a demonstration, and likewise questions the certainty of all those principles from whence any conclusion can be demonstrated. And those who are most sceptical, profess to doubt of all this.

§. 6. Fifthly, “ That it * be apt to convince ^{*P. 11, 12.} “ the most obstinate and acute adversary.” If the rule be plain and certain, the most acute adversary may be convinced by it if he will, that is, if he be not obstinate; but if he be obstinate, that is, such a one as will not be convinced, but will persist in his error in despite of all evidence that can be offered him, then I must profess that I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to convince that man who will not be convinced by any reason that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any rule of faith, though never so self-evident, he might have learned from the same author, in whom he may find his chief properties of the rule of faith, if he had but had the patience to have consider’d his explication of them; I mean ^{*Analyf. fid. 1. 1. c. 3.} Dr. Holden *, who lays down the second property of the rule of faith (or, as he calls it, “ the means

PART. II. “whereby we come to the knowledge of revealed
 “truth”) in these words, “another (viz. condition
 “of this means, &c.) is, that it be apt of its own
 “nature to afford the greatest true and rational
 “certainty, to all men without exception, to whom
 “the knowledge of it shall come; provided they
 “be furnished with the faculty of reason, and
 “have their minds purified from all passion and
 “lust, which do (as he tells us, cap. 6.) often hin-
 “der the most sagacious persons from understanding
 “the most evident and manifest truth. Now I
 “suppose obstinacy to be the effect of passion and
 “lust.”

If Mr. S. mean, that the rule of faith must be apt to conquer obstinacy, and make men lay it aside, I cannot understand this neither; unless he mean that the rule of faith must be a cudgel, which the traditi-
 onary church have been good at, and may use it again when occasion serves; for none but they have a title to it upon a church account, as Mr. S. tells us, corol. 10. But setting aside this, I do not know any thing else that is apt to conquer obstinacy: not the clearest reason, or the strongest demonstration, for that I am sure is no ways fitted to combat a wilful and unreasonable humour with any probability of success. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may easily be convinced by experience how unapt obstinate persons are to be convinced by reason. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the doctrine of CHRIST, preached by himself and his apostles to the obstinate Jews, and confirmed by multitudes of unquestionable miracles; and yet we do not find
 by

by the success of it, that it was so very apt to convince those that were obstinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherwise than by the usual and frequent success of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the doctrine of the gospel was ever intended for that purpose. God hath provided no remedy for the wilful and perverse, but he hath done that which is sufficient for the satisfying and winning over of those who are teachable and willing to learn: and such a disposition supposeth a man to have laid aside both scepticism and obstinacy.

§. 7. Sixthly, “that * it be certain in itself.” * P. 12.

Seventhly, “that † it be absolutely ascertainable † P. 12.
“to us.”

These two are comprehended in the second property I laid down; so that I have nothing to say against them, but that the last looks very like a contradiction, “absolutely ascertainable to us;” which is to say, “with respect to us, without respect to us;” for absolutely seems to exclude respect, and to us implies it.

Having thus shewn, that the seven properties he mentions, are either coincident with these two I have laid down, or consequent upon them, or absurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true properties of a rule of faith are those two which I first named, and no more.

S E C T. II.

That the
properties
of a rule
of faith
belong to
scripture.

§. 1. **L**ET us now see how he endeavours to shew, that these properties agree solely to oral tradition: he tells us "there are but two pretenders to this title of being the rule of faith, scripture and oral tradition; these properties do not belong to scripture, and they do to oral tradition, therefore solely to it." A very good argument, if he can prove these two things, "that these two properties do not belong to scripture, and that they do to oral tradition."

§. 2. In order to the proving of the first, that these properties do not belong to scripture, he premiseth this note, " * that we cannot by the scriptures mean the sense of them, but the book, that is, such or such characters not yet sensed or interpreted." But why can we not, by the scriptures, mean the sense of them? He gives this clear and admirable reason, because the sense of the scripture, is, "the things to be known, and these we confess are the very points of faith, of which the rule of faith is to ascertain us." Which is just as if a man should reason thus: those who say the statute-book can convey to them the knowledge of the statute-law, cannot by the statute-book mean the sense of it, but the book; that is, such or such characters not yet sensed or interpreted; because the sense of the statute-book is the thing to be known; and these are the very laws, the knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this book: which is to say, that a book cannot convey to a man the know-

knowledge of any matter, because if it did, it would convey to him the thing to be known. But that he may farther see what excellent reasoning this is, I shall apply this paragraph to oral tradition, for the argument holds every whit as well concerning that:

“ To speak to them in their own language, who say that oral tradition is their rule, we must premise this note, that they cannot mean by oral tradition the sense of it, that is, the things to be known; for those, they confess, are the very points of faith, of which the rule of faith is to ascertain us: when they say then, that oral tradition is the rule of faith, they can only mean by oral tradition the words wherein it is delivered, not yet sensed or interpreted, but as yet to be sensed; that is, such or such sounds, with their aptness to signify to them assuredly God’s mind, or ascertain them of their faith; for abstracting from the sense and actual signification of those words, there is nothing imaginable left but those sounds, with their aptness to signify it:” when he hath answered this argument, he will have answered his own. In the mean while, this discourse, that he who holds the scripture to be the rule of faith, must needs by the scriptures mean a book void of sense, &c. because otherwise if by scripture he should understand a book, that hath a certain sense in it, that sense must be the doctrine of CHRIST, which is the very thing that this book is to convey to us; I say, this discourse tends only to prove it an absurd thing for any man, that holds scripture the means of conveying CHRIST’s doctrine, to understand by the scripture a book that conveys

CHRIST’S

PART CHRIST'S doctrine. This being his own reason,
 I. put into plain English, I leave the reader to judge
 whether it be not something short of perfect science
 and demonstration. Nay, if it were thoroughly exam-
 ined, I doubt whether it would not fall short
 of that low pitch of science which he speaks of in
 his preface, where he tells us, " that the way of
 " science is to proceed from one piece of sense to
 " another."

§ 3. Having premised this, that by the scriptures we
 must mean only dead characters, that have no sense
 under them, he proceeds to shew that these dead
 characters have not the properties of a rule of faith
 belonging to them. Which although it be nothing
 to the purpose when he hath shewn it, yet it is very
 pleasant to observe by what cross and untoward argu-
 ments he goes about it : of which I will give the
 reader a taste by one or two instances.

In the first place he shews that it cannot be evi-
 dent to us, " that these books were written by men
 * P. 14. " divinely inspired, because * till the seeming contra-
 " dictions in those books are solved, which to do, is
 " one of the most difficult tasks in the world, they
 " cannot be concluded to be of God's inditing."
 Now how is this an argument against those, who by
 the scriptures must mean unsensed letters and charac-
 ters ? I had always thought contradictions had been
 in the sense of words, not in the letters and charac-
 ters ; but I perceive he hath a peculiar opinion, that
 the four and twenty letters do contradict one ano-
 ther.

* P. 17. The other instance shall be in his last argument *,
 which is this, " that the scripture cannot be the rule
 of

“ of faith, because those who are to be ruled and
“ guided by the scripture’s letter to faith, cannot be
“ certain of the true sense of it :” which is to say,
that unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule
of faith, because the rule of faith must have a certain
sense, that is, must not be unsensed letters and charac-
ters ; which in plain english amounts to thus much,
unsensed letters and characters cannot be the rule of
faith, that they cannot.

§ 4. And thus I might trace him through all his
properties of the rule of faith, and let the reader see
how incomparably he demonstrates the falshood of
this protestant tenet (as he calls it) that a senseless book
may be a rule of faith. But I am weary of pursuing
him in these airy and phantastical combats, and shall
leave him to fight with his own fancies, and batter
down the castles which himself hath built. Only I
think fit to acquaint him, once for all, with a great
secret of the protestant doctrine, which it seems he
hath hitherto been ignorant of (for I am still more
confirmed in my opinion, that he forsook our reli-
gion before he understood it) that when they say the
scriptures are the rule of faith, or the means where-
by CHRIST’S doctrine is conveyed down to them,
they mean by the scriptures books written in such
words as do sufficiently express the sense and meaning
of CHRIST’S doctrine.

§ 5. And to satisfy him that we are not absurd and
unreasonable in supposing the scriptures to be such a
book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me
these four things, or shew reason to the contrary.

PART

II.

First, that whatever can be spoken in plain and intelligible words, and such as have a certain sense, may be written in the same words.

Secondly, that the same words are as intelligible when they are written as when they are spoken.

Thirdly, That God, if he please, can indite a book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

Fourthly, that we have no reason to think that God affects obscurity, and envies that men should understand him in those things which are necessary for them to know, and which must have been written to no purpose if we cannot understand them. St Luke

* Luke i. * tells Theophilus, that he wrote the history of
3. 4. CHRIST to him, on purpose to give him a certain

knowledge of those things which he writ. But how a book which hath no certain sense, should give a man certain knowledge of things, is beyond my

* John xx. capacity. St. John * saith, that he purposely com-
31. mitted several of CHRIST's miracles to writing, that

men might believe on him. But now, had Mr. S. been at his elbow, he would have advised him to spare his labour, and would have given him this good reason for it; because when he had written his book, no body would be able to find the certain sense of it without oral tradition, and that alone would securely and intelligibly convey both the doctrine of CHRIST, and the certain knowledge of those miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If these four things be but granted, I see not why, when we say that the scriptures are the means of conveying to us CHRIST's doctrine, we may not be allowed to understand by the scriptures, a book which

doth

doth in plain and intelligible words express to us this doctrine. SECT.
III.

S E C T. III.

§ 1. **A**ND now, although this might have been Mr. S's a sufficient answer to his exceptions against the scriptures, as being incapable of the properties of a rule of faith; because all of them suppose that which is apparently false and absurd, as granted by protestants, viz. that the scriptures are only a heap of dead letters and insignificant characters, without any sense under them; and that oral tradition is that only which gives them life and sense: yet, because several of his exceptions pretend to shew, that the true properties of a rule of faith do not at all appertain to the scriptures; therefore I shall give particular answers to them, and, as I go along, shew that tradition is liable to all or most of those exceptions, and to far greater than those.

§ 2. Whereas he says, “ * it cannot be evident * P. 13. “ to protestants, from their principles, that the books “ of scripture were originally written by men divine- “ ly inspired :” I will shew him that it may, and then answer the reasons of this exception.

It is evident from an universal, constant, and uncontrolled tradition among christians, not only oral, but written, and from the acknowledgment of the greatest adversaries of our religion, that these books were originally written by the apostles and evangelists. And this is not only a protestant principle, but the principle of all mankind, “ That an undoubted “ tradition is sufficient evidence of the antiquity and

PART II. “author of a book,” and all the extrinsecal arguments that can ordinarily be had of a book written long ago.

Next, it is evident that the apostles were men divinely inspired, that is, secured from error and mistake in the writing of this doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it; because it is unreasonable to imagine, that the divine power should so remarkably interpose for the confirmation of a doctrine, and give so eminent an attestation to the apostles to convince the world that they were immediately appointed and commissioned by God, and yet not secure them from error in the delivery of it. And that such miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible histories as we have for any of those things which we do most firmly believe. And this is better evidence that the apostles were men divinely inspired, than bare oral tradition can furnish us withal: for setting aside the authentick relation of these matters in books, it is most probable, that oral tradition of itself, and without books, would scarce have preserved the memory of any of those particular miracles of our saviour and his apostles which are recorded in scripture. And for the probability of this, I offer these two things to his consideration.

First, no man can deny that memorable persons have lived, and actions been done in the world innumerable, whereof no history now extant makes any mention.

Secondly, he himself will grant, that our saviour wrought innumerable more miracles than are recorded in scripture. And now I challenge him to shew the single virtue of oral tradition, by giving an account of

of any of those persons, or their actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 years ago, besides those which are mentioned in books ; or to give a catalogue but of ten of those innumerable miracles wrought by our saviour; which are not recorded by the evangelists, with circumstances as punctual and particular as those are clothed withal : if he can do this, it will be a good evidence that oral tradition singly, and by itself, can do something ; but if he cannot, 'tis as plain an evidence on the contrary, that if those actions of former times, and those miracles of our SAVIOUR and his apostles which are recorded in books, had never been written, but intrusted solely to oral tradition, we should have heard as little of it at this day, as we do of those that were not written.

§ 3. Now to examine his reasons for this exception :

First, he saith, “ * 'tis most manifest that this * P. 13.
“ cannot be made evident to the vulgar, that scripture was written by men divinely inspired.” This reason is as easily answered, by saying it is most manifest that it can : but besides saying so, I have shewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do most firmly, and upon good grounds, believe. Even the rudest of the vulgar, and those who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds that there was such a king as William the conqueror ; and the miracles of CHRIST and his apostles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this.

Secondly, he says, “ * this cannot be evident to * P. 13.
“ the curious and most speculative searchers, but by ¹⁴
“ so deep an inspection into the sense of scripture, as
“ shall discover such secrets, that philosophy and humane industry could never have arrived to.” As if
we

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we could not be assured that any thing were written by men divinely inspired, unless it were above the reach of humane understanding; and as if no man could know that this was our SAVIOUR's doctrine, "What-
" ever ye would that men should do unto you, that
" do ye likewise unto them," because every one can understand it. But if there were more mysteries in the scriptures than there are, I hope a man might be satisfied that they were written by men divinely inspired, without a clear comprehension of all those mysteries. The evidence of the inspiration of any person doth not depend upon the plainness or sublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodness of the arguments which tend to persuade us that the person is so inspired; and the argument that is most fit to satisfy us of that, is, if he work miracles. Now I would gladly know why a learned man cannot be assured of a miracle, that is, a plain sensible matter of fact done long ago, but "by so deep
" an inspection into the sense of scripture, as shall dis-
" cover such secrets that philosophy and humane in-
" dustry could never have arrived to."

* P. 14.

§ 4. Thirdly, because "all the seeming contra-
" dictions of scripture must be solved, before we can
" out of the bare letter conclude the scripture to be
" of God's inditing; to solve which literally, plain-
" ly, and satisfactorily (he tells us) the memory of so
" many particulars, which made them clearer to those
" of the age in which they were written, and the
" matter known, must needs be so worn out by
" tract of time, that it is one of the most diffi-
" cult tasks in the world." As if we could not be-
" lieve a book to be of God's inditing, because there

seem

seem now to be some contradictions in it, which we have reason to believe could easily have been solved by those who liv'd in the age in which it was written. Or as if oral tradition could help a man to solve these contradictions, when the memory of particulars necessary for the clear solution of them is (as himself confesses) worn out by tract of time. If Mr. S. can, in order to the solution of the seeming contradictions of scripture, demonstrate, that oral tradition hath to this day preserved the memory of those particulars (necessary for that purpose) the memory of which must needs be long since worn out by tract of time, then I will readily yield, that his rule of faith hath in this particular the advantage of ours. But if he cannot do this, why doth he make that an argument against our rule, which is as strong against his own? This is! just like captain Everard's friend's way of arguing against the protestants, that they cannot rely upon scripture, because it is full of plain contradictions impossible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reason to submit to the infallibility of the church. And for an instance of such a contradiction, he pitched upon the three fourteen generations mentioned in the first of St. Matthew, because the third series of generations, if they be counted, will be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now, how this difficulty hath been sufficiently satisfied both by protestant and popish commentators, without any recourse to oral tradition; that which I take notice of, is the unreasonableness of making this an exception against the protestants, when it comes with every whit as much force upon themselves. Suppose this contradiction not capable of any solution by protestants (as he affirms) and I should submit

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II.

mit to the infallibility of the church ; can he assure me, that infallibility can make thirteen, fourteen ? If it cannot, how am I nearer satisfaction in this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of the church ? the case is the very same, as to Mr. S's exception, if I owned oral tradition, I should be never the nearer solving the seeming contradictions of scripture, and consequently I could not in reason conclude it to be of God's inditing. So that in truth, these exceptions, if they were true, would not strike at protestancy, but at christian religion ; which is the general unhappiness of most of the popish arguments ; than which there is no greater evidence, that the church of Rome is not the true mother, because she had rather christianity should be destroyed, than it should appear that any other church hath a claim to it. It is a work very proper for the heretick Marcion, to assault religion this way ; who, as Tertullian * tells us, writ a whole book, which he called Antitheses, wherein he reckoned up all the contradictions (as he thought) between the old and new testament : but methinks it is very improper for the papists, who pretend to be the only true christians in the world, to strain their wits to discover as many contradictions as they can in the scripture, and to prove that there is no way of reconciling them ; the natural consequence of which is, the exposing of this sacred instrument of our religion, and even christianity itself to the scorn of atheists. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. S. and captain Everard, I am heartily sorry to see, that one of the chief fruits of their conversion is to abuse the bible.

* L. 1.
contr.
Marcion.

§ 5. Second-

§ 5. Secondly, he says, “ * that protestants cannot know how many the books of scripture ought to be, and which of the many controverted ones may be securely put in that catalogue, which not.” This he proves, by saying, “ ’tis most palpable, that few, or at least the rude vulgar, can never be assured of it.” And if this be a good argument, this again is a good answer, to say it is not most palpable. But I shall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that just so many ought to be received as uncontroverted books, concerning which, it cannot be shewn there was ever any controversy; and so many as controverted, concerning which it appears that question hath been made: and if those which have been controverted have been since received by those churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther doubt concerning them, because the controversy about them is at an end. And now I would fain know, what greater certainty oral tradition can give us of the true catalogue of the books of scripture: for it must either acknowledge some books have been controverted, or not; if not, why doth he make a supposition of controverted books? If oral tradition acknowledge some to have been controverted, then it cannot assure us that they have not been controverted, nor consequently that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as such, concerning which those churches who did once raise a controversy about them, have been since satisfied that they are canonical. The traditionary church now receives the epistle to the Hebrews as canonical. I ask, do they receive it as ever delivered for such? that

PART II. they must, if they receive it from oral tradition, which conveys things to them under this notion, as
 * Com. in ever delivered; and yet St. Hierom speaking (not as
 Esai. c. 6. a speculator, but a testifier) saith expressly of it *, "that
 & c. 8. " the custom of the Latin church doth not receive it
 " among the canonical scriptures." What saith Mr.
 S. to this? It is clear from this testimony, that the
 Roman church, in St. Hierom's time, did not acknow-
 ledge this epistle for canonical; and 'tis as plain, that
 the present Roman church doth receive it for canonical.
 Where is then the infallibility of oral tradition? How
 does the living voice of the present church assure us,
 that what books are now received by her were ever
 received by her? And if it cannot do this, but the
 matter must come to be tried by the best records of
 former ages (which the protestants are willing to have
 their catalogue tried by) then it seems the protestants
 have a better way to know what books are canonical,
 than is the infallible way of oral tradition; and so long
 as 'tis better, no matter tho' it be not called infallible.

* P. 15.

§ 6. Thirdly, he says, " * the Protestants cannot
 " know, that the very original, or a perfectly true
 " copy of these books hath been preserved." It
 is not necessary that they should know either of
 these, it is sufficient that they know, that those
 copies which they have, are not materially cor-
 rupted in any matter of faith or practice; and that
 they have sufficient assurance of this, I have already
 shewn. And how doth he prove the contrary?
 By his usual argument, with saying, " it is manifest-
 " ly impossible." But how do the church of Rome
 know that they have perfectly true copies of the
 scriptures in the original languages? they do not pre-
 tend

tend to know this, the learned men of that church acknowledge the various readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know otherwise than by probable conjecture (as we also may do) which of those readings is the true one. And why should it be more necessary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reasonable to content themselves with knowing, that no material corruptions have crept into those books, so may we. And that there have not, we know by better arguments than oral tradition, even by the assurance we have of God's vigilant providence, and from a moral impossibility in the thing, that a book so universally dispersed, and translated into so many languages, and constantly read in the assemblies of christians, should have been materially corrupted, so as that all those copies and translations should have agreed in those corruptions. And this reason St. Austin * gives of the preservation of the scriptures entire * Ep. 48. rather than any other book; if Mr. S. likes it not, he may call St. Austin to account for it.

§ 7. Fourthly, he says, "the protestants, at least the * P. 15.
" rudest vulgar, can have no assurance that those books
" are rightly translated, because they cannot be assured
" either of the ability or integrity of translators."

Fifthly, "Nor can they (says * he) be assured, that * P. 16,
" the transcribers, and printers, and correctors of the 17.
" press have carefully and faithfully done their part,
" in transcribing and printing the several copies and
" translations of scripture aright; because they only
" can have evidence of the right letter of scripture,
" who stood at their elbows attentively watching
" they should not err in making it perfectly like a
" former copy; and even then, why might they not
" mistrust their own eyes and aptness to oversee?" I

PART

II.

put these two exceptions together, because the same answer will serve them both. The grounds of these exceptions, if they have any, are these : that no man is to be trusted, either for his skill or honesty ; and, that it is dangerous for men to trust their own eyes. Unless both these be true, these exceptions are of no force : for if we can be assured that other men have sufficient skill in any thing which we ourselves do not sufficiently understand, we may be assured that those who translated the bible had skill in the original languages ; because very credible persons tell us so, and we have no reason to doubt their testimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that if we can have sufficient assurance of mens integrity in any thing, we have no reason to doubt of the skill of translators, transcribers, or printers ; and if we can have no assurance of mens integrity in any thing, then no man can be assured there was such a man as Henry the eighth ; and yet I hope the church of Rome makes no doubt of it : nor can any man be assured there is such a city as Rome, who hath not seen it ; nay, if he have, “ * why may he not mistrust his own “ eyes ? ” And, which is the saddest inconvenience of all, if no body be to be trusted, nor mens own eyes, (and for the same reason, sure not their ears) what becomes of the infallibility of oral and practical tradition ? which necessarily supposeth a competent understanding, a faithful memory, an honest mind, in the generality of those who delivered CHRIST’S doctrine down to us : and by what means soever a man can be assured of these, by the same he may much more easily be assured of the ability and integrity of translators, transcribers, and printers. But above all, it supposeth that mens ears and eyes cannot deceive

* P. 16.

deceive them in those things which they are taught and see practised. S E C T.
III.

Is it not very pretty to see what pitiful shifts men that serve an hypothesis are put to? when, to maintain infallibility, they are forced to run to the extremities of scepticism; and to defend the certainty of oral tradition, (which depends upon the certainty of mens senses, and an assurance of the ability and integrity of those who were dead fifteen hundred years before we were born) are glad to take refuge in principles quite contrary; such as these, that we can have no assurance, but that whole professions of men “ * might hap to be knaves,” * P. 16. that we can have no sufficient evidence that any man made his copy perfectly like the former, unless “ * we stood at his elbow, attentively watching him:” * P. 16. nay, and if we did so, we have still reason to distrust our senses. In short, all humane faith supposeth honesty among men; and that for matters of fact and plain objects of sense, the general and uncontrolled testimony of mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar skill and knowledge, that the generality of those who are accounted skilful in that kind, are to be relied upon: for, as Aristotle well observes, there is no greater sign of an undisciplined wit (or, to use one of Mr. S’s fine phrases, “ * of a man not acquainted with the “ paths of science”) than to expect greater evidence for things than they are capable of. Every man hath reason to be assured of a thing which is capable of sufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence for it as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit him to have.

PART have. And, as Mr. White says well, “ * satisfaction is
II.

* Answ. “ to be given to every one according to his capa-
city; it is sufficient for a child to believe his
to the “ parents; for a clown to believe his preacher.”
lord
Falkland, And this is universally true in all cases, where we
P. 33. have not better or equal evidence to the contrary.

But such is the unhappiness of the popish doctrines,
that if people were permitted the free use of the
scripture, they would easily discern them to have
no probable foundation in it, and to be plainly con-
trary to it; so that it cannot be safe for their
preachers to tell the people that the scripture is the
only rule of faith, lest they should find cause not
to believe them, when they teach doctrines so plain-
ly contrary to that rule.

* P. 17. § 8. Lastly, he says, “ * the protestants cannot
be certain of the true sense of scripture.” Does he
mean of plain texts, or obscure ones? Of the true
sense of plain texts I hope every one may be cer-
tain; and for obscure ones, it is not necessary every
one should. But it may be there are no plain texts
in the scriptures: then the reason of it must be (till
Mr. S. can shew a better) either because it is im-
possible for any one to write plainly; or because
God cannot write so plainly as men; or because we
have good reason to think that he would not write
things necessary for every one to believe, so as men
might clearly understand him.

* P. 17. But he tells us, “ * the numerous comments upon
“ scripture are an evidence that no man can be
“ certain of the true sense of it.” I hope not;
for if those numerous commentators do generally
agree in the sense of plain texts (as 'tis certain they
do)

do) then this argument signifies nothing as to such texts; and as for those which are obscure, let commentators differ about them as much as they please, so long as all necessary points of faith and matters of practice are delivered in plain texts. He adds, " * There are infinite disputes about the sense of * scripture, even in most concerning points, as " in that of CHRIST's divinity." But are not commentators, both protestant and popish, generally agreed about the sense of scripture in that point? And what if some out of prejudice mistake, or out of perverseness do wrest the plainest texts of scripture for the divinity of CHRIST, to another sense? is this any argument that those texts are not sufficiently plain? can any thing be spoken or written in words so clear from ambiguity, which a perverse or prejudiced mind shall not be able to vex and force to another meaning? God did not write the scriptures for the froward and the captious, but for those who will read them with a free and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to the knowledge of the truth. If Mr. S. had been conversant in the writings of the fathers, he could not but have taken notice with what confidence they attempted to prove the divinity of CHRIST out of scripture, as if that did afford convincing arguments for this purpose. St. Chrysostom * professes to demon- * Hom. 32 de
strate out of scripture, " that the SON is of the same consub-
stant. " substance with the FATHER;" and relies upon scripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of argument: so that it seems St. Chrysostom was not acquainted with the insufficiency of scripture for the conviction of hereticks in this point;

PART
II.* Hom. 7.
de sancto
Phoca.

point; and that he was either ignorant of the (infallible) way of demonstrating this point from oral tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The same father elsewhere * arguing against hereticks about the divinity of CHRIST, says, "that they pervert the scripture, to strengthen their heresy from thence." But then he does not (with Mr. S.) blame the scripture, and say that this doctrine is not there delivered with sufficient clearness; but contrariwise he says, "that the scripture is clear enough, but the corrupt minds of hereticks will not see what is there contained." Had St. Chrysostom been a true son of the traditional church, he would have laid hold of this occasion to vilify the scriptures, and to shew the necessity of regulating our faith not by such uncertain records, but by the infallible reports of oral tradition.

§ 9. But because Mr. S. lays great weight (in several parts of his book) upon this exception against Scripture, viz. "that protestants cannot be certain of the true sense of it;" therefore I shall not content my self, only to have shewn that we may be sufficiently certain of the sense of scripture, so far as to understand all necessary matters of faith and practice, and that more than this is not necessary; but shall likewise return this exception upon him, by enquiring into these two things;

1. How the traditional church can be more certain of the true sense of scripture than the protestants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true sense of tradition, than protestants of the true sense of scripture?

1. How

1. How the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of scripture than protestants? they pretend to have an oral tradition of the true sense of it, delivered down from father to son. But this only reacheth to those texts, which are coincident with the main body of christian doctrine; as for all other parts of scripture, they are as useless to papists, as they suppose they are to us; because wanting the help of oral tradition, they cannot be certain of one tittle of them. And as for those texts, the sense whereof is conveyed down by oral tradition; this sense is, I hope, delivered in some words or other: and have all preachers, and fathers, and mothers, and nurses, the faculty of delivering this sense in words so plain as cannot possibly be mistaken or wrested to another sense? I am sorry that when every one hath this faculty of speaking their thoughts plainly, the HOLY GHOST should be represented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own objection rebound upon himself? if the church have a certain sense of scripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous comments of the fathers upon it, and of later writers of their church, and the infinite disputes about the sense of it, in the most concerning points? viz. "The efficacy of God's grace, "the supremacy of St. Peter, the infallibility of a "pope and council by immediate assistance of the "HOLY GHOST!" what a stir is made about the sense of *dabo tibi claves, tu es Petrus, & super hanc petram, &c. pasce oves*? Do not they differ about the meaning of these texts among themselves, as much as they do from the fathers, and from the prote-

PART
II.

stants? some understanding them of St. Peter's supremacy only, others of his infallibility, others of his infallibility only in and with a general council; which yet others do not allow to pope or council from any immediate assistance, but only from the rational force of tradition, supposing that the pope and council hold to it. If oral tradition have brought down a certain sense of these texts, why do they not produce it, and agree in it? if it have not (to use a hot phrase of his own *) " 'tis perfect phren-
zy to say they can be certain of the true sense of
" scripture."

* P. 17.

If he say, they are by tradition made certain of the true sense of scripture, so far as it concerns the main body of christian doctrine, and do all agree in it, and that is sufficient; then I ask him, what are those points of faith which make up the body of christian doctrine? He will tell me, they are those which all catholicks agree to have descended to them from the apostles by a constant and uninterrupted tradition. I enquire farther, how I shall know what is the certain sense of scripture so far as it concerns these points? He must answer as before, that that is the true sense which all catholicks agree to have descended to them by tradition. Which amounts to this, that all catholicks do agree in the sense of scripture so far as they do all agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the protestants (how much soever at present they differ about the sense of scripture) may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a passage or two of Mr. Cressy; the one in his appendix *, where he tells us, " That as it is
" impos-

* Exomolog. 2d. edit. p. 554.

“ impossible that hereticks should agree in any other way than in faction; so it is impossible that catholicks should differ in points of faith.” Why so? were not those catholicks first, who afterwards became hereticks? and when they became so, did they not differ in points of belief? yes, but here lies the conceit, when they began to differ, then they ceased to be catholicks; therefore catholicks can never differ in points of faith. The other passage is, where he says *, “ that he hath forsaken a church where unity was impossible, &c. Exomolog. c. 53. sect. 2. and betaken himself to a church where schism is impossible.” This last clause, “ that schism is impossible in their church,” cannot possibly be true but in the same absurd and ludicrous sense, in which it is impossible for catholicks to differ in points of belief. For he cannot deny but that it is possible for men to break off from the communion of their church, which in his sense is schism. But here is the subtilty of it, no schismatick is of their church, because so soon as he is a schismatick he is out of it; therefore schism is impossible in their church. And is it not as impossible in the church of England? Where Mr. Cr. might have done well to have continued, till he could have given a wiser reason of forsaking her.

§ 10. But to return to our purpose: Mr. Rushworth * acknowledgeth, that the scripture is of itself sufficiently plain as to matters of practice; for he asks, “ Who is so blind as not to see that these things are to be found in scripture by a sensible, common, and discreet reading of it; though perhaps by a rigorous and exact balancing of every

PART II. "particular word and syllable, any of these things
 II. "would vanish away we know not how?" So

that for the direction of our lives and actions, he confesseth the scripture to be sufficiently plain, if men will but read it sensibly and discreetly; and (he says) that he is blind that does not see this.

But who so blind as he who will not see, that the sense of scripture is as plain in all necessary points of faith? I am sure St. Austin makes no difference, when he tells us, " * That in those things

De doctr.
Christ.
l. 2.

"which are plainly set down in scripture, we may
 "find all those things in which faith and manners
 "of life are comprehended." And why cannot men, in reference to matters of faith as well as of practice, read the scriptures sensibly and discreetly; without such a rigorous balancing of every word and syllable, as will make the sense vanish away we know not how? If the scripture be but sufficiently plain to such as will use it sensibly and discreetly, I do not understand what greater plainness can be desired in a rule; nor can I imagine what kind of rule it must be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious cavillers, and such as are bent to play the fool with it.

Well, suppose the scriptures be not sufficiently clear as to matters of faith; and hereupon I have recourse to the church for the true sense of scripture; must I believe the church's sense to be the true sense of such a text, though I see it to be plainly contrary to the genuine sense of the words? yes, that I must, or else I make myself, and not the church, judge of the sense of scripture, which is the grand heresy of the protestants. But then I must not suppose,

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pose, much less believe, that the church's sense of such text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it; no, although I plainly see it to be so: this is hard again on the other hand; especially if it be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy, viz. that though general councils cannot mistake in the points of faith which they decree, yet they may mistake in the confirmation of them from texts of scripture, that is, they may be mistaken about the sense of those texts. And if Mr. S. think his brethren have granted too much, he may see this exemplified in the second council of Nice (to mention no other) which, to establish their doctrine of image-worship, does so palpably abuse and wrest texts of scripture, that I can hardly believe that any papist in the world hath the forehead to own that for the true sense of those texts which is there given by those fathers.

SECT.
III.

§ 11. Secondly, how the traditionary church can be more certain of the true sense of their traditional doctrines, than the protestants can be of the true sense of scripture? and this is worthy of our enquiry, because if the business be search'd to the bottom, it will appear (besides all other inconveniences, which oral tradition is much more liable to than scripture) that the certain sense and meaning of traditional doctrine is as hard to come at as the sense of scripture. And this I will make appear by necessary consequence from their own concessions. Mr. White and Mr. S. say, that the great security of tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain phrases and set forms of expression, but the same sense is conveyed and settled in mens hearts by various

PART various expressions. But according to Mr. Rushworth, this renders tradition's sense uncertain; for

II.
 * Dial. 2. he says, " * 'tis impossible to put fully, and beyond
sect. 6.

" all quarrel, the same sense in divers words." So that if men do not receive tradition in a sensible, common, discreet way (as Mr. Rushworth speaks concerning reading the scriptures) but will come to a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phrase, word, and syllable, the sense of tradition will be in the very same danger of uncertainty, and be liable to vanish we know not how. Dr. Hol-

* Analyf. den * lays down these two principles, " First, that
fidei, l. 1. " no truth can be conveyed down from man to
c. 9.

" man but by speech; and speech cannot be but
" by words; and all words are either equivocal in
" themselves, or liable to be differently understood
" by several persons. Secondly, that such is the
" frame of man's mind, that the same truths may
" be differently apprehended and understood by
" different persons:" and if this be true, then traditional doctrines, if they be delivered by speech and words, will be liable to uncertainties and ambiguities, as to their sense, as well as scripture.

* Append. Mr. Cressy * tells us, " that reason and ex-
c. 6.

" perience shew, that differences will arise even
" about the writings of the fathers, and any thing
" but the testimony of the present church." If this be true, tradition wholly falls into uncertainty: for if difference will arise about the writings of the fathers how they are to be interpreted, I suppose the writings of councils will be liable to the same inconvenience: and if the whole present church cannot declare her sense of any traditional doctrine
other-

otherwise than by a council, (unless with the jesuits they will epitomize the church into the pope) and the decrees of a council cannot be universally dispersed (or at least never use to be) but by writing: and if differences will arise about the interpretation of that writing, as well as any other, then this present infallible authority (which Mr. Cressy magnifies so much for ending of differences) leaves all controversies arising about the sense of tradition as indeterminable as ever; and they must for ever remain so, till general councils have got the knack of penning their decrees in words which will so infallibly express their meaning to the most captious caviller, that no difference can possibly arise about the interpretation of them, or else (which will be more suitable to this wise hypothesis) till general councils (being convinc'd by Mr. S's demonstrations) shall come to understand themselves so well, as not to intrust their decrees any more to the uncertain way of writing, but for the future to communicate them to the world by the infallible way of oral tradition. And to mention no more, Mr. Knott * * Answ. to Chilling. c. 2. sect. 6. (who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain sense of scripture is only to be had from the church) speaks to this purpose, that before we can be certain that this is the true sense of such a text, we must either be certain that this text is capable of no other sense, as figurative, mystical, or moral; or if it be, we must have some certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken, which can be known only by revelation. If this be true, then by a fair parity of reason, before I can be certain that this is the sense of a doctrinal tradition

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dition delivered down to me, I must either be certain that the words in which this tradition was expressed when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other sense (as figurative, mystical, or moral) besides that in which I understood them; or if they be (as certainly they will be) capable of any of these other senses, then must I have some certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of these they are taken: and this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true sense of such a text of scripture. If it be said, that the sense of a traditionary doctrine may by different expressions be still farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to understand the sense of it; this will not help the matter: for if these kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words, till he can by an infallible argument demonstrate either that they cannot be taken, or that they are not taken in any other sense; I say, if this cavil will hold, then every new expression whereby any one shall endeavour to explain any traditional doctrine, is liable to the same inconvenience which those words in which it was first delivered to me were liable to. From all which it is evident, that the traditionary church can be no more certain of the sense of their traditional doctrines, than protestants may be of the sense of scripture.

§ 12. These are his exceptions contained in his second discourse; and of what force they are, hath been examined. But because he foresaw that it might be replied, that these defects might in part be provided against “by history, by the providence of

God,

"God, by testimonies of councils and fathers, and S E C T.
III.
"by the sufficient clearness of scripture as to the fun-
"damentals;" he endeavours to shew that these sig-
nify little to this purpose.

First, "Not history", because few are skilled P. 17, 18.
"in history, and they that are not, cannot safely
"rely upon those that are skilled, unless they knew
"certainly that the historians whom they rely on
"had secure grounds, and not bare hear-say for what
"they writ, and that they were not contradicted
"by others either extant or perished." How much
credit is to be given to uncontrolled history by the
learned, and how much by the vulgar to men of
skill, I have already shewn. I shall only add now,
that if this reasoning be true, it is impossible for any
man to be certain by history of any ancient matter
of fact, as namely, that there were such persons
as Julius Cesar and William the conqueror, and
that they invaded and conquered England, because
(according to him) we cannot know certainly that
the historians, who relate these things, and upon
whose authority we rely, "had secure grounds, and
"not bare hear-say, for what they writ: and that
"they were not contradicted by others either ex-
"tant or perished," is, I am sure, impossible for
any man to know: for who can tell now what was
contained in those books which are perished? so
that if this be requisite to make every historical re-
lation credible, to know certainly that it was not
contradicted by any of those books which we do
not know what they were, nor what was in them, we
can have no certainty of any ancient fact or history:
for who knows certainly that some books that are
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perished did not contradict whatever is written in books that are extant? nay, if this reasoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral tradition: for what though the priest tell me this was the doctrine of CHRIST delivered to him? unless I know that all others agree with him in this tradition, I cannot rely upon his testimony: nor then neither, in Mr. Knott's * opinion, "because the testimony of many of preachers or pastors is humane and fallible! unless (according to his jargon) a conclusion, deduced from premises, one of which is only probable, may be sufficient to bring our understanding to an infallible act of faith, viz. if such a conclusion be taken specificative; whereas if it be taken reduplicative, as it is a conclusion, it can only beget a probable assent;" which is to say, that considered barely as a conclusion, and so far as in reason it can deserve assent, it is only probable; but considered as it serves an hypothesis, and is convenient to be believed with reason or without, so it is infallible. But to carry the supposition farther: put the case, that the whole present age assembled in a general council, should declare that such a point was delivered to them; yet (according to Mr. S.) we cannot safely rely upon this, unless we knew certainly, that those whom they relied on "had secure grounds, and not bare hear-say, for what they delivered; and that they were not contradicted within the space of 1500 years by any of those that are dead;" which is impossible for any one now to know.

* Answer
to Chil-
ling. c. 1.
§ 33.

But to shew how inconsistent he is with himself in these matters, I will present the reader with a passage or two in another part of his book, where he endeavours to prove that men may safely rely on a general
and

and uncontrolled tradition. He tells us, “ * That SECT.
III.
“ the common course of humane conversation makes P. 49.
“ it madness not to believe great multitudes of
“ knowers, if no possible considerations can awa-
“ ken in our reason a doubt that they conspire to de-
“ ceive us.” And a little after, “ * nor can any, * Ibid.

“ unless their brains rove wildly, or be unsettled even
“ to the degree of madness, suspect deceit, where such
“ multitudes agree unanimously in a matter of fact.”
Now if men be but supposed to write, as well as to
speak; what they know, and to agree in their writ-
ings about matter of fact; then it will be the same
“ madness not to believe multitudes of historians,
“ where no possible consideration can awaken in our
“ reason a doubt that they have conspired to deceive
“ us; and mens brains must rove wildly, and be un-
“ settled even to the degree of phrenzy, who suspect
“ deceit where such multitudes unanimously agree in
“ a matter of fact.” And this seems to me to be the
great unhappiness of Mr. S’s demonstrations, that
they proceed upon contradictory principles; so that
in order to the demonstrating of the uncertainty of
books and writings, he must suppose all those prin-
ciples to be uncertain, which he takes to be self-evi-
dent and unquestionable, when he is to demonstrate
the infallibility of oral tradition.

§ 13. Secondly, he tells us *, “ the providence of * P. 38.
“ God is no security against those contingences the
“ scriptures are subject to; because we cannot be cer-
“ tain of divine providence or assistance to his church,
“ but by letter of scripture; therefore that must first
“ be proved certain, before we mention the church,
“ or God’s assistance to her.” As if we pretended

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there were any promise in scripture that God would preserve the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherwise be assured of it; as if the light of natural reason could not assure us of God's providence in general, and of his more especial care of those things which are of greatest concernment to us, such as this is, that a book containing the method and the terms of salvation should be preserved from any material corruption. He might as well have said, that without the letter of scripture we cannot know that there is a God.

* P. 18,
19.

§ 14. Thirdly, "Nor (says he *) can testimonies of councils and fathers be sufficient interpreters of scripture." We do not say they are. Our principle is, that the scripture doth sufficiently interpret it self, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things necessary to be believed and practised. And the general consent of fathers in this doctrine of the sufficient plainness of scripture (which I shall afterwards shew) is a good evidence against them. As for obscure and more doubtful texts, we acknowledge the comments of the fathers to be a good help, but no certain rule of interpretation. And that the papists think so, as well as we, is plain; inasmuch as they acknowledge the fathers to differ among themselves in the interpretation of several texts: and nothing is more familiar in all popish commentators, than to differ from the antient fathers about the sense of scripture. And as for councils, Dr. Holden and Mr. Cressy (as I said before) do not think it necessary to believe that always to be the true sense of texts which councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm points of faith. Nay, if any controversy arise about the sense of

of any text of scripture, it is impossible (according to Mr. Rushworth's principles) for a council to decide either that, or any other controversy : for he * makes it his business to prove, " that controversies cannot " be decided by words ;" and if this be so, then they cannot be decided at all, unless he can prove that they may be decided without words, and consequently that councils may do their work best in the quakers way by silent meetings.

SECT.
III.

* Dial. 2.
sect. 8.

§ 15. Fourthly, " Nor can (says he *) the clear-
ness of scripture as to fundamentals be any help
against these defects." Why not ?

* P. 20,

21.

First, because " a certain catalogue of fundamen-
tals was never given and agreed to by sufficient
authority, and yet without this all goes to wreck." I hope not, so long as we are sure that God would make nothing necessary to be believed but what he hath made plain ; and so long as men do believe all things that are plainly revealed (which is every one's fault if he do not) men may do well enough without a precise catalogue. But suppose we say, that the articles of the apostles creed contain all necessary matters of simple belief ; what hath Mr. S. to say against this ? I am sure the Roman catechism, set forth by the decree of the council of Trent, says * as much as
this comes to, viz. " that the apostles having received a command to preach the gospel to every creature, thought fit to compose a form of christian faith, namely to this end, that they might all think and speak the same things, and that there might be no schisms among those whom they had called to the unity of faith, but that they might all be perfect in the same sense and the same opinion :

* Prefat.

PART
II.

“ nion : and this profession of the christian faith and hope, so framed by them, the apostles called the “ symbol or creed.” Now how this end of bringing men to unity of faith, and making them perfectly of the same sense and opinion, could probably be attained by means of the creed, if it did not contain all necessary points of simple belief, I can by no means understand. Besides, a certain catalogue of fundamentals is as necessary for them as for us; and when Mr. S. gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. Chillingworth had a great desire to have seen Mr. Knott’s catalogue of fundamentals, and challenged him to produce it, and offered him very fairly, that whenever he might with one hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own : but Mr. Knott, tho’ he still persisted in the same demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth his own, but kept it for a secret to his dying day. But to put a final stop to this canting demand of a catalogue of fundamentals (which yet I perceive I shall never be able to do, because it is one of those expletive topicks which popish writers, especially those of the lowest form, do generally make use of to help out a book) however, to do what I can towards the stopping of it, I desire Mr. S. to answer the reasons whereby his friend Dr. Holden * shews the unreasonableness of this demand, and likewise endeavours to prove that such a catalogue would not only be useless and pernicious if it could be given, but that it is manifestly impossible to give such a precise catalogue.

* Analyf.
fid. l. i.
c. 4.

* P. 21. Secondly, he asks, “ * Is it a fundamental that “ CHRIST is GOD ? If so, whether this be clearer in “ scripture, than that GOD hath hands, feet, &c.”

To

To which I answer by another question, is it clear that there are figures in scripture, and that many things are spoken after the manner of men, and by way of condescension and accommodation to our capacities ; and that custom and common sense teacheth men to distinguish between things figuratively and properly spoken ? If so, why cannot every one easily understand, that when the scripture saith " God hath " hands and feet, and that CHRIST is the vine and " the door," these are not to be taken properly, as we take this proposition, that CHRIST is God, in which no man hath any reason to suspect a figure ? When Mr. S. tells us, " that he percheth upon the " specifical nature of things," would it not offend him, if any one should be so silly as to conclude from hence that Mr. S. believed himself to be a bird, and nature a perch ? and yet not only the scriptures, but all sober writers, are free from such forced and fantastical metaphors. I remember that Origen * taxeth * L. 4] Celsus's wilful ignorance in finding fault with the scriptures, for attributing to God humane affections, as anger, &c. and tells him, " that any one who " had a mind to understand the scriptures, might " easily see, that such expressions were accommodated to us, and accordingly to be understood ; and that no man, that will but compare " these expressions with other passages of scripture, " need to fail of the true sense of them." But (according to Mr. S.) Origen was to blame to find fault with Celsus for thinking that the scriptures did really attribute humane affections to God ; for how could he think otherwise, when " the most fundamental point is not clearer in scripture, than that " God

PART. "God hath hands, feet. &c.?" How could Origen
 II. in reason expect from Celsus (though never so great
 a philosopher) that he should be able, without the
 help of oral tradition, to distinguish between what is
 spoken literally, and what by a certain scheme of
 * Hæret. speech? Theodoret * tells us of one Audæus, who
 fabul. l. 4. held that God had a humane shape, and bodily mem-
 bers; but he does not say that the reason of this er-
 ror was, because he made scripture the rule of his
 faith, but expressly because "he was a fool, and did
 " foolishly understand those things which the divine
 " scriptures speak by way of condescension." So
 that although Mr. S. is pleased to make this wise
 objection, yet it seems (according to Theodoret) that
 men do not mistake such texts, either for want of oral
 tradition, or of sufficient clearness in the scriptures,
 but for want of common reason and sense. And if
 Mr. S. know of any rule of faith that is secure from
 all possibility of being mistaken by foolish and per-
 verse men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it,
 and with him for its sake.

S E C T. IV.

That scrip- § 1. IN his next discourse he endeavours to shew,
 ture is a sufficient rule to the unlearned, and to the most rational doubt-
 (rs.) acting rationally in receiving the scripture for the
 word of God, and relying upon it as a certain rule;
 because they are not capable of satisfaction concerning
 these matters. But I have already shewn that they
 are, and shall not repeat the same over again. And
 * P. 24. whereas he says *, "that several professions all pretend
 " to scripture, and yet differ, and damn, and perfe-
 " cute

"cute one another about these differences ;" the answer is easy : that they all pretend to scripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the word of God, and the rule of faith ; and that they are generally agreed about the sense of those plain texts which contain the fundamental points of faith, is evident in that those several professions acknowledge the articles contained in the apostles creed to be sufficiently delivered in scripture : and if any professions differ about the meaning of plain texts, that is not an argument that plain texts are obscure, but that some men are perverse. And if those professions damn and persecute one another about the meaning of obscure texts, the scripture is not in fault, but those that do so.

§ 2. And whereas he pretends *, " that the scripture is not able to satisfy sceptical dissenters and rational doubters, because nothing under a demonstration can satisfy such persons so well concerning the incorruptedness of originals, the faithfulness of translations, &c. but that searching and sincere wits may still maintain their ground of suspense with a might it not be otherwise ?" This hath been answered already, partly by shewing that the scripture was not intended to satisfy scepticks, and that a demonstration is not sufficient to give satisfaction to them ; and partly by shewing that rational doubters may have as much satisfaction concerning those matters, as the nature of the thing will bear ; and he is not a rational doubter that desires more.

But that he may see the unreasonableness of this discourse, I shall briefly shew him, that all mankind do in matters of this nature accept of such evidence as falls short of demonstration ; and that his great friends

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II.

and masters, from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his book (though he manageth them to less advantage) do frequently acknowledge, that it is reasonable for men to acquiesce in such assurance as falls short of infallibility, and such evidence as is less than demonstration. Do not mankind think themselves sufficiently assured of the antiquity and authors of several books, for which they have not demonstrative evidence? Doth not Aristotle say, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of fact done long ago, are incapable of demonstration; and that it is madness to expect it for things of this nature? Are there no passages in books so plain, that a man may be sufficiently satisfied that this and no other is the certain sense of them? if there be none, can any thing be spoken in plainer words than it may be written? if it cannot, how can we be satisfied of the certain sense of any doctrine orally delivered? and if we cannot be so satisfied, where's the certainty of oral tradition? but if books may be written so plainly as that we may be abundantly satisfied that this is the certain sense of such and such passages, then we may reasonably rest satisfied in evidence for these matters short of demonstration. For was ever the sense of any words so plain as that there did not remain this ground of suspense, that those words might be capable of another sense? Mr. Rushworth * says, "that disputative scholars do find means daily to explicate the plainest words of an author to a quite different sense:" and that the world might be furnish'd with an advantageous instance of the possibility of this, Raynaudus * (a writer of their own) hath made a wanton experiment upon the apostles creed, and by a

* Dial. 2.
sect. 7.

* De bonis
& malis
libris.

finister

sinister (but possible) interpretation, hath made every article of it heresy and blasphemy, on purpose to shew that the plainest words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr. S. can outdo the Apostles, and can deliver the christian doctrine so clearly, that he can demonstrate it impossible for any man to put any other sense upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done, but if Mr. S. doth this he must both amend his style and his way of demonstration.

Is Mr. S. sufficiently assured that there is such a part of the world as America? and can he demonstrate this to any man without carrying him thither? can he shew by any necessary argument, that it is naturally impossible that all the relations concerning that place should be false? when his demonstrations have done their utmost, cannot “ * a * P. 27: “ searching and sincere wit at least maintain his “ ground of suspense with a might it not be other- “ wise? ” and, with an is it not possible that all men may be liars, or that a company of travellers may have made use of their privilege to abuse the world by false reports, and to put a trick upon mankind? or that all those who pretend to go thither, and bring their commodities from thence, may go to some other parts of the world, and taking pleasure in abusing others in the same manner as they have been imposed upon themselves, may say they have been at America? who can tell but all this may be so? and yet I suppose notwithstanding the possibility of this, no man in his wits is now possessed with so incredible a folly as to doubt whether there be such a place. The case is the

PART very same as to the certainty of an ancient book,
II. and of the sense of plain expressions: we have no demonstration for these things, and we expect none because we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any book is so ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whose name it bears, or that this is the sense of such and such passages in it; it is possible all this may be otherwise, that is, it implies no contradiction: but we are very well assured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any just cause to make the least doubt of it. For a bare possibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no just cause of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is possible all the people of France may die this night, but I hope the possibility of this doth not incline any man in the least to think it will be so: it is possible the sun may not rise to morrow morning; and yet, for all this, I suppose that no man hath the least doubt but that it will.

§ 3. But because this principle, viz. "That in matters of religion a man cannot be reasonably satisfy'd with any thing less than that infallible assurance which is wrought by demonstration," is the main pillar of Mr. S's book; therefore, beside what hath been already said to shew the unreasonableness of this principle, I shall take a little pains to manifest to him how much he is contradicted in this by the chief of his brethren of the tradition, viz. Mr. Rushworth, Dr. Holden, Mr. Cressy, and Mr. White, who, besides Mr. S. and one J. B. are (so far as I can learn) all the publick patrons that ever this hypothesis of oral tradi-

tion

tion hath had in the world ; and if Mr. White (as I have reason to believe) was the author of those dialogues which pass under Rushworth's name, the number them is yet less. Now if I can shew that this principle (esteem'd by Mr. S. so fundamental to this hypothesis) is plainly contradicted by the principal assertors of oral tradition, I shall hereby gain one of these two things, either that these great patrons of oral tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own hypothesis, or that this principle is not necessary for the support of it. Not that I would be so understood as if I did deny that these very persons do sometimes speak very big words of the necessity of infallibility : but if it be their pleasure to contradict themselves, as I have no reason to be displeased, so neither to be concerned for it ; but shall leave it to Mr. S. to reconcile them first to themselves, and then (if he pleases) afterwards to himself.

§ 4. I begin with Mr. Rushworth of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his, to persuade the world that notwithstanding he was the first inventor of this hypothesis of oral tradition, yet he could prove that the church had in all ages owned it, and proceeded upon it as her only rule of faith. He in his third dialogue, * when his nephew objects to him, " that perhaps a protestant would say * Sect. 3. & 4. " that all his foregoing discourse was but probability and likelihood, and therefore to hazard a man's estate upon peradventures, were some thing hard, and not very rationally done : " replies thus to him, " what security do your merchants, your statesmen, your soldiers, those that
" go

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H.

“ go to law, nay, even those that till your grounds
 “ and work for their livings; what security, I say,
 “ do all these go upon? is it greater than the se-
 “ curity which these grounds afford? surely no;
 “ and yet no man esteems them foolish. All hu-
 “ mane affairs are hazardous, and have some ad-
 “ venture in them: and therefore he who requires
 “ evident certainty only in matters of religion, dis-
 “ covers in himself a less mind to the goods pro-
 “ mised in the next life, than to these which he
 “ seeks here in this world upon weaker assurance.
 “ Howsoever, the greatest evidence that can be to
 “ him that is not capable of convincing demon-
 “ strations (which the greatest part of mankind
 “ fall short of) is but conjectural.” So that (ac-
 “ cording to Mr. Rushworth) it is not reason and dis-
 “ cretion, but want of love to God and religion,
 “ which makes men require greater evidence for mat-
 “ ters of religion than for humane affairs, which yet
 “ (he tells us) “ are hazardous, and have some adven-
 “ ture in them,” and consequently are not capable
 “ of demonstration. Besides, “ if demonstrative evi-
 “ dence be an essential property of the rule of faith
 “ (as Mr. S. affirms) then this rule cannot (ac-
 “ cording to Mr. Rushworth) be of any use to
 “ the greatest part of mankind, because they are
 “ not capable of convincing demonstrations.”

Ibid. sect.
6.

Again, “ do but consider (says he *) how unequal
 “ and unjust a condition it is, that the claim of
 “ the present church shall not be heard, unless she
 “ can confute all the peradventures that wit may
 “ invent, and solve all the arguments which the in-
 “ finite variety of time, place, and occasions may
 “ have

“ have given way unto; and then you will see how S E C T.
IV.
 “ unreasonable an adversary he is, who will not be
 “ content with any satisfaction, but such as man’s na-
 “ ture scarcely affords.” And is it not equally unjust
 in Mr. S. “ not to let scripture’s claim be heard, un-
 “ less we can confute every peradventure [and might
 “ it not be otherwise] that wit may invent?” See then
 “ how unreasonable an adversary Mr. S. is, who
 “ will not be content with any satisfaction, but such
 “ as (according to Mr. Rushworth) man’s nature
 “ scarcely affords.”

Dr. Holden (I confess) states the matter some-
 what cautiously, when he tells us, “ * that it shall suf- * L. i c. 1.
 “ fice for the present to determine, that the wisdom of
 “ the creator hath afforded us such an assurance,
 “ especially of truths necessary to salvation, as is
 “ suitable to our nature, and best fitted for the safe
 “ conduct of our lives in moral and religious af-
 “ fairs :” but if we interpret these general expres-
 sions by the passages I before cited out of Mr.
 Rushworth (as in reason we may, since the doctor
 is beholden to him for the best part of his book)
 then nothing can make more against Mr. S’s
 principle.

§ 5. Mr. Cressy in his exomologesis, * says, “ that * C. 19.
 “ such teachers as approached nearest to the foun- sect. 5.
 “ tain of truth, CHRIST and his apostles, had means
 “ of informing themselves in apostolical tradition
 “ incomparably beyond us.” Mr. S. may do well
 to shew what those means were which are so in-
 comparably beyond his infallibility and demonstra-
 tion. The same author * does very much applaud * C. 32.
 Stapleton’s determination of the question concerning sect. 4.
 the

PART. the church's infallibility, which is as follows, " that
 II.

" the church does not expect to be taught by God
 " immediately by new revelations, but makes use of
 " several means, &c. as being govern'd not by
 " apostles, &c. but by ordinary pastors and teachers.
 " That these pastors in making use of these several
 " means of decision, proceed not as the apostles did,
 " with a peculiar infallible direction of the HOLY
 " SPIRIT, but with a prudential collection not al-
 " ways necessary. That to the apostles, who were
 " the first masters of evangelical faith, and founders
 " of the church, such an infallible certitude of means
 " was necessary; not so now to the church, &c."

If this be true, that an infallible certitude of means is not now necessary to the church; and that her pastors do now in deciding matters of faith proceed only with a prudent collection not always necessary; then it should seem that a searching wit may maintain his ground of suspense, even against their church also, " with a might it not be other-

*Append. " wise?" Again Mr. Cressy * tells us, " that truth
 c. 5. " and our obligation to believe it, is in an higher
 " degree in scripture than in the decisions of the
 " church, as Bellarmine acknowledges;" which is to say, that we may have greater assurance of the truth of doctrines contain'd in the scriptures, than we can have of any doctrine from the determination of the church. But if we have the greatest assurance that can be of truths deliver'd to us by the church, as Mr. S. affirms, then I would fain learn of him what that greater degree of assurance is which Bellarmine speaks of, and whether it be greater than the greatest? Not to insist upon that (which
 yet

yet I cannot but by the way take notice of) that SECT. IV. Mr. Cressy, by his approbation of this determination of Bellarmine's, doth advance the scripture above the church, as to one of the most essential properties of the rule of faith, viz. the certainty of it.

But the most eminent testimony to my purpose in Mr. Cressy, is that famous passage * (which hath * C. 40. sect. 3, &c. given so much offence to several of his own church) wherein he acknowledges "the unfortunateness (to "him) of the word infallibility," and tells us, "that he could find no such word in any council; "that no necessity appeared to him that either he "or any other protestant should ever have heard "that word nam'd, and much less press'd with so "much earnestness as of late it has generally been "in disputations and books of controverfy; and "that Mr. Chillingworth combats this word with "too great success; insomuch that if this word "were once forgotten, or but laid by, Mr. Chillingworth's arguments would lose the greatest part "of their strength; and that if this word were "confin'd to the schools where it was bred, there "would be still no inconvenience: and that since "by manifest experience the English protestants "think themselves so secure, when they have leave "to stand or fall by that word, and in very deed "have so much to say for themselves when they "are pressed unnecessarily with it: since likewise it "is a word capable of so high a sense that we cannot devise one more full and proper to attribute to "God himself, &c." Since all this is so, he thinks he cannot "be blamed, if such reasons move him

PART II. "to wish that that the protestants may never be

"invited to combat the authority of the church under that notion." A very ingenuous acknowledgment, and as cross to Mr. S's principle as any thing can be. But the word infallibility was not so unfortunate to Mr. Cressy, as his untoward explication of the fore-cited passage in his appendix, which he afterwards published chiefly by way of vindication of himself against the learned author of the preface to my lord Falkland's discourse of infalli-

* Append. bility. There he tells us *, "that there are several sect. 2, and "degrees of infallibility." And that we may know 3.

what degrees of infallibility he thinks necessary to be attributed to the church, this following passage will inform us: "methinks (he says) if God have "furnished his divine and supernatural truth, with "evidence equal to this, that the sun will shine to-morrow, or that there will be a spring and harvest next year, we are infinitely obliged to bless his providence, and justly condemned, if we refuse to believe the least of such truths, as shewing less affection to save our souls than the dull plowmen to sow their corn, who certainly have far less evidence for their harvest than catholicks for their faith; and yet they insist not peevishly upon every capricious objection, nor exact an infallible security of a plentiful reaping next summer, but notwithstanding all difficulties and contingencies proceed chearfully in their painful husbandry." So that according to this discourse, whatever degree of assurance the church hath, or can give to those who rely upon her, it is plain that no further degree is necessary than what the husband-

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man when he sows, hath of a plentiful harvest, and that men are justly condemned if they refuse to believe the least truth upon such security, which yet (by his own acknowledgment) is liable to contingencies: nay farther, that men are not reasonable, "but peevish, in exacting infallible security, and insisting upon every capricious objection, such as is Mr. S's might it not be otherwise?" Now as to this degree of assurance, or (as he calls it) infallibility, I cannot but grant what he says of it to be most true, viz. "that in a severe acceptance of the word, it is not rigorously infallible, that is, (as he explains it) it is not absolutely impossible nor does it imply a flat contradiction" that the thing whereof we are so assured may be otherwise: but then I utterly deny, that according to any true acceptance of this word, such a degree of assurance as he speaks of can be called infallibility; and withal I affirm, that none of those several degrees of infallibility which he mentions, excepting that only which imports an absolute impossibility, can with any tolerable propriety of speech, or regard to the true meaning and use of the word, have the name of infallibility given to them. For infallibility can signify nothing else but an utter impossibility that one should be deceived in that matter as to which he is supposed to be infallible; and to say such a thing is impossible, is to say that the existence of it implies a flat contradiction: so that whosoever asserts degrees of infallibility, is obliged to shew that there are degrees of absolute impossibilities, and of perfect contradictions; and he had need of a very sharp and piercing wit, that is

PART to find out degrees where there neither are nor
 II. can be any. Indeed, in respect of the objects of knowledge, it is easy to conceive how infallibility may be extended to more objects or fewer; but in respect of the degree of assurance (of which Mr. Cressy speaks) it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or less out of all possibility of being deceived in those things wherein he is supposed to be infallible; for no one can be more removed from the possibility of being deceived, than he that is out of all possibility of being deceived; and whosoever is less than this is not infallible, because he only is so who is out of all possibility of being deceived in those matters wherein he is supposed to be infallible: so that Mr. Cressy's lower degrees of infallibility are no degrees of that assurance which may properly be called infallible (for that can have no degrees) but of that assurance which is less than infallible. And he needed not have raised all this dust about the degrees of infallibility, had it not been that by the means of such a cloud he might make the more convenient escape out of that strait he was in between the clamours of his own church, and the advantage which his adversaries made of his free and open discourse against infallibility: for any one that carefully reads his book, will find that he understands nothing by the infallibility of the church, but "an authority of obliging all christians to submit to her decisions," which is no more but what every supreme civil judge hath in matters, viz. a power to determine those controversies that lie before him as well as he can or will, and when that is done every one is bound

bound to submit to such determinations; but yet for all this, no man ever dreamt a supreme civil judge to be infallible more than another man. I do not now dispute the extent of the church's authority: but if she have no other infallibility but what a full authority of decision does suppose, I am sure she hath none at all.

Before I leave Mr. Cressy, I cannot but take notice how unfortunate and disingenuous he is in explaining the meaning of these words of his own, viz. ["against this word infallibility Mr. Chillingworth's book especially combats, and this with "too too great success"] which in his appendix * * C. 51 he interprets thus; "success, I mean, not against the church, but against his own soul, and the souls of his fellow-english protestants, &c." As if one that had wished well to Cesar should have said, "that Pompey had fought against him with too "too great success;" and being afterwards challenged by Cesar's party, as having said that Pompey had conquered Cesar, he should explain himself thus, "success, I mean not against Cesar, but against his "own life, and the lives of his followers. Can any thing be finer, than for a man to say, that by Pompey's success in fighting against Cesar, he means that Cesar had beaten Pompey? which is no more than if one should take the liberty to interpret white by black.

§ 6. Lastly, Mr. White doth most expressly contradict this principle of Mr. S's in these following passages. In his preface to Mr. Rushworth he says, "that such a certainty as makes the cause always "work the same effect, though it take not away "the absolute possibility of working otherwise, "ought

PART. " ought absolutely to be reckoned in the degree of
 II. " true certainty; and those authors are mistaken

" who undervalue it." So that it seems Mr. S. is
 mistaken in affirming that a man cannot be
 certain of any thing so long as there is any pos-
 sibility that it may be otherwise. In his answer
 * P. 14, 15. to my lord Falkland, he says, " * that in moral
 " matters, and such as are subject to humane
 " action, we must expect such assurance as humane
 " actions bear. If for the government of your spi-
 " ritual life you have as much as for the manage-
 " ment of your natural and civil life, what can you
 " expect more? Two or three witnesses of men be-
 " yond exception will cast a man out of not only
 " his lands but life and all. He that among mer-
 " chants will not adventure, where there is a hun-
 " dred to one of gaining, will be accounted a silly
 " factor: and among soldiers, he that will fear dan-
 " ger, where but one of a hundred is slain, shall
 " not escape the stain of cowardice. What then
 " shall we expect in religion, but to see a main ad-
 " vantage on the one side which we may rest our-
 " selves on? and for the rest remember we are men
 " subject to chance and mutability, and thank God
 " he hath given that assurance in a supernatural
 " way, which we are contented withal in our civil
 " ventures and possessions, which nevertheless God
 " knoweth we often love better and would hazard
 " less than the unknown good of the life to come."

* P. 30: Again, " * If God almighty hath in all sorts and
 " manners provided his church that she may en-
 " lighten every man in his way that goeth the way
 " of a man, then let every man consider which is
 " the

“ the fit way for himself, and what in other matters
“ of that way, he accounteth evidence. And if
“ there be no interest in his soul to make him
“ loth to believe, what in another matter of the
“ like nature he doth not stick at, or heavy to
“ practise; what he sees clearly enough, I fear not
“ his choice.” Once more; directing a man in
his search after rational satisfaction in matters of re-
ligion, he hath this passage; “ * Besides this, he * P. 46.
“ must have this care, that he seek what the na-
“ ture of the subject can yield, and not as those
“ physicians, who when they have promised no less
“ than immortality, can at last only reach to some
“ conservation of health or youth in some small
“ degree: so I could wish the author to well assure
“ himself first that there is possibly an infallibility,
“ before he be too earnest to be contented with no-
“ thing less; for what if humane nature should not
“ be capable of so great a good? would he there-
“ fore think it fitting to live without any religion,
“ because he could not get such a one as himself
“ desired, though with more than a man’s wish?
“ Were it not rational to see, whether among reli-
“ gions some one have not such notable advantages
“ over the rest, as in reason it might seem humane
“ nature might be contented withal? Let him cast
“ his account with the dearest things he hath, his
“ own or friends lives, his estate, his hope of pos-
“ terity, and see upon what terms of advantage
“ he is ready to venture all these; and then return
“ to religion, and see whether, if he do not ven-
“ ture his soul upon the like, it be truly reason or
“ some other not confessed motive, which with-
“ draws

PART II. “ draws him. For my own part, as I doubt not
 “ of an infallibility, so I doubt not but setting that
 “ aside, there be those excellencies found on the
 “ catholick party which may force a man to pre-
 “ fer it, and to venture all he hath upon it be-
 “ fore all other religions and sects in the world.
 “ Why then may not one who after long searching
 “ findeth no infallibility rest himself on the like,
 “ supposing man’s nature affords no better? ”

Are not these fair concessions, which the evidence
 and force of truth have extorted from these authors?

* Letter to his answerer, p. 5. So that it seems that that which Mr. S. calls “ * a
 “ civil piece of atheistry,” is advanced in most ex-
 press words by his best friends; and therefore I
 hope he will (as he threatens me) “ be smart with
 “ them in opposition to so damnable and funda-
 “ mental an error.” And whenever he attempts
 this, I would intreat him to remember that he hath
 these two things to prove: First, that no evidence
 but demonstration can give a man sufficient assu-
 rance of any thing. Secondly, that a bare possi-
 bility that a thing may be otherwise, is a rational
 cause of doubting, and a wise ground of suspense:
 which when he hath proved, I shall not grudge him
 his infallibility.

SECT.

The RULE of FAITH.

S E C T. V.

645
S E C T.
V.

§ 1. **T**HE last part of this third discourse endeavours to shew, "that the scripture is not convictive of the most obstinate and acute adversaries." As for the obstinate, he knows my mind already: Let us see why the most acute adversary may not be convinced by scripture: because, as he objects *, first, "we cannot be certain that this book is God's word, because of the many strange absurdities and heresies in the open letter as it lies, as that God hath hands and feet, &c. and because of the contradictions in it:" to which I have already returned an answer. Secondly, because (as he saith *) "we cannot be certain of the truth of the letter in any particular text, that it was not foisted in, or some way altered in its significativeness; and if it be a negative proposition, that the particle [not] was not inserted; if affirmative, not left out." And if we pretend to be certain of this, "he demands * our demonstration for it." But how unreasonable this demand is, I hope I have sufficiently shewn. And to shew it yet further, I ask him, how their church knows, that the particle [not] was not left out of any text in which it is not found in their copies? I know he hath a ready answer, viz. by oral tradition. But this (according to him *) "only reaches to scriptures letter so far as it is coincident with the main body of christian doctrine;" concerning the rest of scripture it is impossible (according to his own principles) that they should have any security that the particle [not] was not unduly inserted, or left out by the transcribers. Nay, as to those

That scripture is sufficient to convince the most acute adversaries, and that it is sufficiently certain
* P. 28.

* P. 31.

* P. 31.

* P. 116.

PART

II.

texts of scripture which fall in with the main body of christian doctrine, I demand his demonstration that the particle [not] was not unduly inserted or left out, not only in those texts, but also in the oral tradition of the doctrines coincident with the sense of those texts. If he say, it was impossible any age should conspire to leave out or insert the particle [not] in the oral tradition; so say I it was that they should conspire to leave it out of the written text: but then I differ from him thus far, that I do not think this naturally impossible, so as that it can rigorously be demonstrated, but only morally impossible, so that no body hath any reason to doubt of it; which to a prudent man is as good as a demonstration. Pyrrho himself never advanced any principle of scepticism beyond this, viz. that men ought to question the credit of all books, concerning which they cannot demonstrate as to every sentence in them, that the particle [not] was not inserted (if it be affirmative) or left out (if it be negative.) If so much be required to free a man from reasonable doubting concerning a book, how happy are they that have attained to infallibility? What he saith concerning

* P. 32. the *variæ lectiones* * of scripture, hath already had a sufficient answer.

- § 2. In his fourth discourse he endeavours to shew,
- * P. 33. “ * that the scripture is not certain in itself, and consequently not ascertained to us.” First, “ not cer-
- * P. 34. “ tain, materially considered * as consisting of such “ and such characters, because books are liable to be “ burnt, torn, blotted, worn out.” We grant it is not impossible but that any, or all the books in the world, may be burnt: but then we say likewise, that a book

book so universally dispersed may easily be preserved; SECT.
V.
though we have no assurance that God will preserve

it, in case all men should be so foolish or so careless as to endeavour or suffer the abolition of it. But it seems the scriptures cannot be a rule of faith if they be liable to any external accidents: and this (he tells us)

“ * though it may seem a remote and impertinent * P. 34.

“ exception, yet to one who considers the wise dis-

“ positions of divine providence, it will deserve a

“ deep consideration; because the salvation of man-

“ kind being the end of God’s making nature, the

“ means to it should be more settled, strong and un-

“ alterable, than any other piece of nature whatever.”

But notwithstanding this wise reason, this exception still seems to me both remote and impertinent: for if this which he calls a reason be a truth, it will from thence necessarily follow not only that the doctrine of CHRIST must be conveyed by such a means as is more unalterable than the course of nature; but also by a clear parity of reason, that all the means of our salvation do operate towards the accomplishing of their end with greater certainty than the fire burns, or the sun shines; which they can never do, unless they operate more necessarily than any natural causes; how they can do so upon voluntary agents, I desire Mr. S. to inform me.

§ 3. He proceeds by a long harangue to shew,

“ * that not only these material characters in them- * P. 34.

“ selves are corruptible, but in complexion with the

“ causes, actually laid in the world to preserve them

“ entire; because either those causes are material,

“ and then they are also liable to continual alterati-

“ ons; or spiritual, that is, the minds of men, and

PART II. “ from these we may with good reason hope for a
 “ greater degree of constancy, than from any other
 “ piece of nature ;” which, by the way, is a very
 strange paradox, that the actions of voluntary agents
 have a greater certainty and constancy in them than
 those of natural agents ; of which the fall of angels
 and men, compared with the continuance of the sun
 and stars in their first state, is a very good evidence.

- * P. 35. § 4. But he adds a caution *, “ that they are per-
 “ fectly unalterable from their nature, and unerrable,
 “ if due circumstances be observed, that is, if due
 “ proposals be made to beget certain knowledge, and
 “ due care used to attend to such proposals.” But
 who can warrant, that due proposals will always be
 made to men, and due care used by them ? If these
 be uncertain, where’s the constancy and unerrableness
 he talks so much of ? so that notwithstanding the con-
 stancy of this spiritual cause (the mind of man) of
 preserving scriptures entire, yet in order to this (as
 he tells * us) “ so many actions are to be done, which
 “ are compounded and made up of an innumerable
 “ multitude of several particulars to be observed,
 “ every of which may be mistaken apart, each being
 “ a distinct little action in its single self, such as is
 “ the transcribing of a whole book, consisting of such
 “ myriads of words, single letters, and tittles or stops ;
 “ and the several actions of writing over each of
 “ these so short and cursory, that it prevents dili-
 “ gence, and exceeds humane care, to keep awake
 “ and apply distinct attentions to every of these
 “ distinct actions.” Mr. Rushworth * much outdoes
 * Dial. 2. Mr. S. in these minute cavils, for he tells us, “ that
 sect. 7. “ supposing an original copy of CHRIST’s words,
 “ written

“ written by one of the evangelists in the same language, let him have set down every word and syllable : yet men conversant in noting the changes of meanings in words, will tell us, that divers accents in the pronunciation of them, the turning of the speaker’s head or body this or that way, &c. may so change the sense of the words, that they will seem quite different in writing from what they were in speaking.” I hope that oral and practical tradition hath been careful to preserve all these circumstances, and hath delivered down CHRIST’S doctrine with all the right traditional accents, nods, and gestures necessary for the understanding of it ; otherwise the omission of these may have so altered the sense of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at first. But to answer Mr. S. we do not pretend to be assured that it is naturally impossible that the scriptures should have been corrupted or changed, but only to be sufficiently assured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good arguments as the nature of the subject will bear. But if his reason had not been very short and cursory, he might easily have reflected that oral tradition is equally liable to all these contingencies ; “ for it doth as much prevent diligence, and exceed humane care, to keep awake and apply distinct attentions to the distinct actions of speaking, as of writing.” And I hope he will not deny, that a doctrine orally delivered, consists of words, and letters, and accents, and stops, as well as a doctrine written ; and that the several actions of speaking are as short and cursory as of writing.

§ 5. Secondly,

PART
II.

§ 5. Secondly, he tells us *, “ scripture, formally considered, as to its significativeness, is also uncertain:” First, “ † because of the uncertainty of the letter:” This is already answered. Secondly, “ * because the certain sense of it is not to be arrived to by the vulgar, who are destitute of languages and arts.” True, where men are not permitted to have the scriptures in their own language, and understand no other: but where they are allowed the scriptures translated into their own language, they may understand them; all necessary points of faith and practice being sufficiently plain in any translation of the bible that I know of. And that * eminent wits cannot agree about the sense of texts which concern the main points of faith, hath been spoken to already.

§ 6. As for the reverence he pretends to scripture in the conclusion of his fourth discourse, he might have spared that, after all the rallery and rudeness he hath used against it. It is easy to conjecture, both from his principles and his uncivil expressions concerning them, what his esteem is of those sacred oracles. Probably it was requisite in prudence to cast in a few good words concerning the scriptures, for the sake of the more tender and squeamish novices of their religion, or (as Mr. Rushworth’s nephew * says frankly and openly) “ for the satisfaction of indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent respect of the scripture;” who it seems are not yet attained to that degree of catholick piety and fortitude, as to endure patiently that the word of God should be reviled or slighted. Besides that in reference to those whom they hope hereafter to convert (who might be too much alienated from their

* Dial. 2.
sect. 14.

their religion, if he had expressed nothing but contempt towards a book, which protestants and christians in all ages, till the very dregs of popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of) it was not much amiss to pass this formal compliment upon the bible; which the wife of his religion will easily understand, and may serve to catch the rest. But let him not deceive himself, "God is not mocked."

SECT.
VI.

S E C T. VI.

§ 1. **S**Econdly, he comes to shew *, "that the properties of a rule of faith belong to
"oral tradition." And, first, he gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this oral practical tradition, which amounts to this; that as in reference to the civil education of children, "they are taught their own
"and others names, to write, and read, and exercise
"their trades:" so in reference to religion, "the
"children of christians first hear sounds, afterwards
"by degrees get dim notions of GOD, CHRIST, SAVIOUR, heaven, hell, virtue, vice, and by degrees
"practise what they have heard; they are shewn to
"say grace, and their prayers, to hold up their
"hands, or perhaps eyes, and to kneel, and other
"postures. Afterwards they are acquainted with
"the creed, ten commandments, and sacraments,
"some common forms of prayer, and other practices
"of christianity, and are directed to order their lives
"accordingly, and are guided in all this by the actions and carriage of the elder faithful; and this
"goes on by insensible degrees, not by leaps, from a
"hundred years to a hundred, but from month to
"month,

That the properties of a rule of faith do not belong to oral tradition.
* P. 41.

PART

II.

“ month, and even less.” If this be all that tradition doth, this is nothing but what is done among protestants, and that with greater advantage; because we always teach children to say their prayers in a known tongue, so as they may understand them. And we also teach them the creed, and ten commandments, and the sacraments, so many as CHRIST hath instituted, and no more. So that if this be so infallible a way of conveying the doctrine of christianity, we have it among us: and we do over and besides instruct them in the scriptures, which are the authentick instrument whereby CHRIST’s doctrine is conveyed to us. But then we do not suppose (as his hypothesis necessarily enforceth him to do) that the christian doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by some more, by others less perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of parents and teachers, and the various capacities and dispositions of children; whereas his hypothesis falls, if all or at least the generality of parents, do not instruct their children with the like exactness, and if the generality of children do not receive this doctrine in the same perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it must necessarily be so conveyed, and these variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us how all parents do teach their children the whole body of CHRIST’s doctrine, and explain to them every part of it in a hundred or a thousand several expressions signifying the same sense, and not have instanced in two set forms, such as the creed, and ten commandments; for according to Mr. White *, “ that cannot be a tradition which is delivered down in set words.”

* Apolog.
p. 81.

§ 2. Having

§ 2. Having thus explained oral tradition, he comes to shew that the properties of a rule of faith agree to it. I have already shewed, that the true properties of a rule of faith are but two, viz. "That it be plain and intelligible, and that it be sufficiently certain." The first of these, that oral tradition may deliver a doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him : All the difficulty is about the second property, whether we have sufficient assurance that the doctrine delivered down by oral tradition hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance: and all that he pretends to prove in this discourse, is, that if this rule hath been followed and kept to all along, the christian doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any change, that is, if the next age after the apostles did truly, and without any alteration, deliver the christian doctrine to their immediate successors, and they to theirs, and so on, then upon this supposition the doctrine of the present traditinary church must be the very same with that which was delivered to the apostles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impossible there should have been any deviation from it (as he pretends) this we deny, not only as untrue, but as one of the most absurd propositions that ever yet pretended to demonstrative evidence.

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART III.

*In which Mr. S's demonstrations and corollaries
are examined.*

SECT. I.

Confide-
rations
touching
his demon-
strations in
general.

§ I. **B**Efore I come to speak particularly to his demonstrations, I shall premise these two considerations: First, that (according to the principles of the patrons of tradition) no man can, by his private reason, certainly find out the true rule of faith. Secondly, that (according to Mr. S.) the way of demonstration is no certain way to find out the rule of faith. If either of these be made out, his demonstrations lose all their force. If the first be made good, then he cannot demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, nor consequently, that that is the rule of faith. If the second, then the way of demonstration which he pretends to take, signifies nothing.

§ 2. First, no man can (according to the principles of the patrons of tradition) by his private reason certainly find out what is the rule of faith. Suppose a heathen to be desirous to inform himself of the christian faith; in order to which he is
inquisitive

inquisitive after some rule by which may take a measure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: he enquires of christians what their rule is, and finds them divided about it, some saying that the scripture, others that oral tradition, is the rule. In this case it is not possible (without a revelation) for this man to find out the rule of faith, but by his own private reason examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both sides. And when he hath done this, unless he can by his reason demonstrate that the one is a certain and infallible rule, and the other not so, he hath not (according to Mr. S.) found out the rule of faith. But reason can never do this, according to Mr. S. For speaking of demonstrating the certainty of tradition, he tells us, “ * that tradition hath for its basis man’s

* P. 53.

“ nature, not according to his intellectuals, which “ do but darkly grope in the pursuit of science, &c.”

And again, * speaking how reason brings men to the rule of faith, he uses this comparison “ she is

* Append.
2d. P. 183.

“ like a dim-sighted man, who used his reason to “ find a trusty friend to lead him in the twilight, “ and then relied on his guidance rationally without using his own reason at all about the way it “ self.” So that (according to him) the certainty of tradition cannot be founded on demonstration, because it is not founded in the intellectual part of man, which only can demonstrate. Besides, if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonstrate the certainty of tradition, because that faculty which is dim-sighted, and does but grope darkly in the pursuit of science, is incapable of framing demonstrations. Nor can any

PART
III.

man understand how dim-sighted reason should see clearly to choose its guide any more than its way, especially if it be considered what a pretty contradiction it is, to say that reason, as it is dim-sighted, can see clearly.

But Mr. Cressy is not contented to call every man's reason dim-sighted, he ventures a step farther, and calls it hoodwink'd and blind: for he tells us,

* Append. " * that private reason is apparently a most fallible
c. 6. sect. 8. " guide ; " and he pities † my lord Falkland's case,
† Ibid. because in the search of the true religion he did
sect. 9. " betake himself to the casual conduct of blind, hu-

* Ibid.
sect. 11.

" mane, natural reason," which afterwards he calls
" * a guide that two persons cannot possibly fol-
" low together, because no two persons (that ever
" followed any other guide beside authority) did
" or could think all things to be reasonable that
" all others thought so; and by consequence such
" a guide that as long as he continues in that office,
" there cannot possibly be any church any where:
" which (says he) is an infallible eviſtion that this
" is an imaginary ſeducing guide, ſince it is im-
" poſſible that that ſhould be a guide appointed
" for any chriſtian, which neither CHRIST nor his
" apoſtles, nor any of their followers ever men-
" tioned, yea, which formally deſtroys one of our
" twelve articles of the apoſtles creed, viz. I be-
" lieve the holy catholick church." Thus he does
by reaſon clearly and infallibly evince, that reaſon
cannot be otherwiſe than a moſt blind and fallible
guide. This it is to talk of things when a man
looks only upon one ſide of them; as if becauſe
reaſon has a blind ſide, and is uncertain in ſome
things,

things, therefore we ought to conclude her universally blind and uncertain in every thing; and as if because all men cannot think all things reasonable which any one man thinks to be so, therefore it is to be doubted whether those common principles of reason be true, which mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. Cressy speaks here of the use of our private reason in the finding out of our rule, is clear from what he says in the next section, viz. "that this hoodwink'd guide (enquiring into " scripture, and searching after tradition) may possibly stumble upon the way to unity and truth, " that is, the true catholick church." If this be true, why does Mr. S. pretend that he can by reason demonstrate the infallibility of tradition, and by this hoodwink'd guide lead men to the true rule of faith? and what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquisitive philosopher (who knowing no other guide but his reason, whereby to find out whether scripture or tradition be the rule) to tell him that by the help of this hoodwink'd guide he might possibly stumble upon the right?

A man may justly stand amazed at the inconsistency of these mens discourses and principles. In one mood they are all for demonstration, and for convincing men in the way of perfect science, which is the true rule of faith: but then again when another fit takes them, there's no such thing as science, humane reason grows all on the sudden dim-sighted, and at the next word is struck stark-blind; and then the very utmost that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquisitive person to the true rule of faith, is to leave him in a possibility

PART III. ^{III.} fibility of stumbling upon it; but if he be a heretick

* Append. " * it is impossible but that he with his blind guide
c. 7. lect. " shall fall into the pit." I cannot, for my part,
8.

* Ibid.

imagine how they can reconcile the blindness of humane reason with all that noise which they make about science and demonstration; but this I must confess, that these kind of discourses which I meet with in Mr. S. and Mr. Cressy, are very proper arguments to persuade a man of the blindness of humane reason. And indeed there is one passage in Mr. Cressy, which gives me very great satisfaction concerning these matters, where he tells us, " * that
" the wit and judgment of catholicks is to renounce their own judgment, and depose their
" own wit." Now he that professes to have done this, may write contradictions, and no body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that when he forsook our church and turned papist, he laid aside his judgment and wit; which is just such an heroick act of judgment, as if a man, in a bravery to shew his liberty, would sell himself for a slave. I am glad to understand from an experienced person, what charges a man must be at when he turns roman catholick, namely, that whoever will embrace that religion must forfeit his reason.

* P. 353, § 3. Secondly, the way of demonstration is (according to Mr. S.) no certain way to find out the
& 254. rule of faith. In his 4th appendix * against my lord of Down, one of the eight mines (as he calls them) which he lays to blow up my lord's dissuasive against popery, is this, " That the method
" he

“ he takes in dissuading cannot be held in reason S E C T.

“ to have power to dissuade, unless it be proper I.

“ to that effect, that is, not common to that ef-

“ fect and a contrary one. Now, that being most

“ evidently no method or way to such an effect

“ which many follow and take, yet arrive not at

“ that effect; 'tis plain to common sense, that my

“ lord of Down miscalls his book a dissuasive, and

“ that it can have in it no power of moving the

“ understanding one way or other, unless he can

“ first vouch some particularity in the method he

“ takes, above what's in others in which we expe-

“ rience miscarriage, &c.” If this be true, then

his method of demonstration, is no way to make

men certain of what he pretends to demonstrate,

“ because that is most evidently no way to an effect

“ which many follow and take, yet arrive not at

“ that effect; so that 'tis plain to common sense

“ that Mr. S's demonstrations can have in them

“ no power of moving the understanding one way

“ or other, unless he can vouch some particularity

“ in the demonstrations he pretends to bring, above

“ what is in other pretended demonstrations in

“ which we experience miscarriage.” Do not Tho-

mas and Scotus (as Mr. White tells us *) all along * *Exetasis,*

pretend to demonstrate? and yet it is generally be- P. 24.

lieved that (at least where they contradict one ano-

ther) one of them failed in his demonstrations.

Did not Mr. Charles Thynne pretend to have de-

monstrated that a man at one jump might leap

from London to Rome? and yet I do not think

any one was ever satisfy'd with his demonstra-

tions. And Mr. S. knows one in the world (whom

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III.

I will not name, because he hath since ingenuously acknowledged his error) who thought he had demonstrated the quadrature of the circle, and was so confident of it as to venture the reputation of his demonstrations in divinity upon it, and some of those divinity demonstrations were the very same with Mr. S's. Since therefore the world hath experienced so much miscarriage in the way of demonstration, before Mr. S's demonstrations can be allowed to signify any thing, he must (according to his own law) vouch some particularity in his way and method of demonstration above what is in other mens. He hath not any where (that I remember) told us what that particularity is, wherein his way of demonstration is above other mens: nor can I upon the most diligent search find any peculiar advantage that his way has more than theirs above-mentioned; unless this be one that he pretends to demonstrate a self-evident principle, and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. Charles Thynne; and unless this may be counted another advantage, that he has so extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own demonstrations; and in this particular, I must acknowledge that he clearly excels all that have gone before him: In all other things, his way of demonstration is but like his neighbours.

SECT.

The RULE of FAITH.

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SECT.

II.

SECT. II.

§ 1. **I** Come now to examine his demonstrations of Mr. S's this self-evident principle (as he often calls demonstration *à priori*) that oral tradition is a certain and infallible way of conveying CHRIST's doctrine from one age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to say, that it is impossible but that this rule should always have been kept to. That this is not a self-evident principle, needs no other evidence than that he goes about to demonstrate it. But yet, notwithstanding this, I think he hath as much reason to call this a self-evident principle, as to call his proofs of it demonstrations.

§ 2. In order to his demonstration *à priori*, he lays * these four grounds, which I shall set down in * P. 59, his own words. First, "that christian doctrine was ^{60.} " at first unanimously settled by the apostles, in the " hearts of the faithful, dispersed in great multitudes " over several parts of the world." Secondly, "that " this doctrine was firmly believed by all those faith- " ful to be the way to heaven, and the contradict- " ing or deserting it, to be the way to damnation: " so that the greatest hopes and fears imaginable " were by engaging the divine authority strongly ap- " plied to the minds of the first believers, encourag- " ing them to the adhering to that doctrine, and de- " terring them from relinquishing it; and indeed " infinitely greater than any other whatever, spring- " ing from any temporal consideration: and that " this was in all ages the persuasion of the faith- " ful." Thirdly, "that hopes of good and fears

VOL. IV. 7 B " of

PART. " of harm strongly applied, are the causes of actual
 III. " will." Fourthly, " that the thing was feasible or
 " within their power: that what they were bred to
 " was knowable by them. This put, it follows as
 " certainly, that a great number or body of the first
 " believers, and after faithful in each age, that is,
 " from age to age, would continue to hold themselves,
 " and teach their children as themselves had been
 " taught, that is, would follow and stick to tradition;
 " as it doth, that a cause put actually causing produc-
 " eth its effect." This is his demonstration with the
 grounds of it.

§ 3. To shew the vanity and weakness of this pretended demonstration, I shall assail it these three ways; by shewing, first, that if the grounds of it were true they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. Secondly, that his main grounds are apparently false. Thirdly, that his demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary.

S E C T. III.

The first
 answer to
 his de-
 monstra-
 tion.

§ 1. **I**F the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impossible which common experience evinceth, and himself must grant to have been. For if these two principles be true, " that the greatest hopes and fears
 " are strongly applied to the minds of all christians;
 " and that those hopes and fears strongly applied
 " are the cause of actual will to adhere constantly
 " to CHRIST's doctrine;" then from hence it fol-
 " lows

lows that none that entertain this doctrine can ever fall from it, because falling from it is inconsistent with an actual will of adhering constantly to it: for supposing (as he doth) certain and constant causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine, those who entertain it must actually will to adhere to it, because a cause put actually causing produceth its effect, which is constant adherence to it. And if this were true, these two things would be impossible; first, that any christian should turn apostate or heretick; secondly, that any christian should live wickedly: both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himself must grant *de facto* to have been.

§ 2. First, it would be impossible that any christian should turn apostate or heretick. Heresy, according to him, is nothing else but the renouncing of tradition. Now he tells us, “* that the first renoun- * P. 60.
“ cers of tradition must have been true believers or
“ holders of it ere they renounced it;” and I suppose there is the same reason for apostates. But if all christians or true believers (as he calls them) have these arguments of hope and fear strongly applied, and hope and fear strongly applied be the causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine; ’tis necessary all christians should adhere to it, and impossible there should be either apostates or hereticks. For if these causes be put “in all the faithful actually causing (as the
“ grounds of his demonstration suppose) and indefec-
“ tibility be the proper and necessary effect of these
“ causes,” as he also saith *, then it is impossible * P. 75.
that where these causes are put, there should be any defection: for a proper and necessary effect cannot

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but be where the causes of such an effect are put, especially if they be put actually causing; and consequently 'tis impossible that any single christian should ever either totally apostatize or fall into heresy, that is, renounce tradition.

§ 3. And that this is a genuine consequence from these principles (though he will not acknowledge it here, because he saw it would ruine his demonstration) is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts

* P. 54. of his discourse. For he tells us, “ * that it exceeds

“ all the power of nature (abstracting from the causes

“ of madness and violent disease) to blot the know-

“ ledge of this doctrine out of the soul of one single

* P. 78. “ believer; and * that since no man can hold con-

“ trary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds,

“ nor change and innovate without knowing he doth

“ so, it is a manifest impossibility a whole age should

“ fall into an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature

* P. 89. “ of one single man.” And, “ * that it is perhaps

“ impossible for one single man to attempt to deceive

“ posterity by renouncing tradition.” Which pas-

sages laid together amount to thus much, that it is

impossible that tradition should fail in any one single

person. And though in the passage last cited he speaks

faintly, and with a perhaps, as if he apprehended

some danger in speaking too peremptorily, yet any

one would easily see the last to be as impossible as any

of the rest. And he himself elsewhere, being in the

full career of his bombast rhetoric, delivers it round-

* P. 54. ly without fear or wit, “ * sooner may the sinews of

“ entire nature by overstraining crack, and she lose

“ all her activity and motion, that is, herself, than

“ one single part of that innumerable multitude

“ which

“ which integrate that vast testification which we
“ call tradition, can possibly be violated.”

§ 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him, and press his demonstration too far, because he tells us he only intends by it to prove that the generality of christians will always adhere to tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he should then have brought a demonstration that would have concluded no more ; but this concludes of all as well as of the generality of christians. A clear evidence that it is no demonstration, because it concludes that which is evidently false, that there can be no apostates or heretics. Besides, supposing his demonstration to conclude only that the generality of christians would always adhere to tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to history. St. Hierom tells us, “ * that Liberius bi-

“ shop of Rome (for all his particular title to infal-

“ libility built upon tradition, as Mr. S. speaks, co-

“ roll, 28.) turned Arian. And that * Arianism was

“ established by the synod of Ariminum, which was

“ a council more general than that of Trent. And

“ that * almost all the churches in the whole world

“ under the names of peace and of the emperor, were

“ polluted by communion with the Arians.” Again,

“ that * under the emperor Constantius (Eusebius and

“ Hippatius being consuls) infidelity was subscribed

“ under the names of unity and faith. And * that the

“ whole world groined and wondered to see itself turned

“ Arian.” And he * uses this as an argument to the

Chron.
ad annum
Christ.

352.

Ad an.

363.

Ad an.

364.

Advers.

Lucifer.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

was

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- was exceeding small: “ for (says he) the synod of
 “ Nice which consisted of above three hundred bi-
 “ shops, received eight Arian bishops whom they
 “ might have cast out without any great loss to the
 “ church. I wonder then how some, and those the
 “ followers of the Nicene faith, can think that three
 “ confessors (viz. Athanasius, Hilarius, Eusebius)
 “ ought not to do that in case of necessity for the
 “ good and safety of the whole world, which so ma-
 “ ny and so excellent persons did voluntarily.” It
 seems Arianism had prevailed very far, when St. Hier-
 om could not name above three eminent persons in
 the church who had preserved themselves untainted
 with it. Again, “ * Arius in Alexandria was at first
 “ but one spark, but because it was not presently ex-
 “ tinguish’d, it broke out into a flame which de-
 “ voured the whole world.” Gregory Nazianzen *
 likewise tells us to the same purpose, “ that the Arian
 “ heresy seized upon the greatest part of the church.”
 And to shew that he knew nothing of Mr. S’s de-
 monstration of the indefectibility of the generality of
 christians, he asks, “ * where are those that define
 “ the church by multitude, and despise the little flock,
 “ &c.?” And this heresy was of a long continuance,
 for from its rise which happened in the 20th year of
 Constantine, it continued (as Joh. Abbas * hath cal-
 culated it) 266 years. And the Pelagian heresy (if
 we may believe Bradwardine, one of the great cham-
 pions of the church against it) did in a manner pre-
 vail as much as Arianism, as the said author complains
 in his preface to his book, “ * that almost the whole
 “ world was run after Pelagius into error.” Will
 Mr. S. now say, “ that in the height of these heresies
 “ the

* In epist.
ad Galat.
1. 3.

* Orat.
20. & 21.

* Orat.
25.

* Chron.
ad annum
octavum
Maurit.

* Causa
Dei.

“ the generality of christians did firmly adhere to SECT-
 “ tradition ? ” If he say they did, let him answer III.
 the express testimonies produced to the contrary :
 but if they did not, then his demonstration also fails
 as to the generality of christians. And if the greater
 part of christians may fall off from tradition, what
 demonstration can make it impossible for the lesser
 to do so ? who will say it is in reason impossible
 that a thousand persons should relinquish tradition,
 though nine hundred of them have already done it,
 and though the remainder be no otherwise secured
 from doing so, than those were who have actually
 relinquished it ? Now is not this a clear evidence
 that this which he calls a demonstration *à priori*,
 is no such thing ? because every demonstration *à*
priori, must be from causes which are necessary,
 whereas his demonstration is from voluntary causes.
 So that unless he can prove that voluntary causes are
 necessary, he shall never demonstrate that it is
 impossible for the generality of any company of
 men to err, who have every one of them free-will,
 and are every one of them liable to passion and
 mistake.

§ 5. From all this it appears, that his whole dis-
 course about the original and progress of heresy, and
 the multitudes of hereticks in several ages, is as clear
 a confutation of his own demonstration as can be
 desired. The only thing that he offers in that dis-
 course, to prevent this objection, which he foresaw
 it liable to, is this, “ it is not (says he *) to be expected * P. 65;
 “ but that some contingencies should have place,
 “ where a whole species in a manner is to be wrought
 “ upon ; it sufficeth that the causes to preserve faith
 “ inde-

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“ indefinitely entire, are as efficacious as those
 “ which are laid for the preservation of mankind;
 “ the virtue of faith not being to continue longer
 “ than mankind its only subject does; and they will
 “ easily appear as efficacious as the other, if we
 “ consider the strength of those causes before expli-
 “ cated, and reflect that they are effectively power-
 “ ful to make multitudes daily debar themselves of
 “ those pleasures which are the causes of mankind’s
 “ propagation; and if we look into history for ex-
 “ perience of what hath passed in the world since
 “ the propagating of christianity, we shall find
 “ more particulars failing in propagating their
 “ kind, than their faith.” To which I answer,

First, that it may reasonably be expected there
 should be no contingencies in any particulars, where
 causes of actual will are supposed to be put in all;
 “ because (as he says truly) a cause put actually causing
 “ cannot but produce its effect.” Suppose then con-
 stant causes laid in all mankind of an actual will to
 speak truth to the best of their knowledge, were it not
 reasonable to expect that there would be no such con-
 tingency to the world’s end, as that any man should
 tell a lye? Nay, it were madness for any man to
 think any such contingency should be, supposing
 causes actually causing men always to speak truth.

Secondly, it is far from truth, “ that the causes to
 “ preserve faith indefinitely entire, are as efficacious
 “ as those which are laid for the propagation of
 “ mankind,” And whereas he would prove the
 strength of those causes which are laid to preserve
 faith, “ because they are effectively powerful to
 “ make multitudes daily debar themselves of those

“ pleasures

“ pleasures which are the causes of mankind’s propagation ;” I hope no body that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in their own historians, and others of the best and most credible of their own writers, of more than one age concerning the general viciousness and debauchery of their priests and monks, will be over-forward to believe that all those who debar themselves of lawful marriage, do abstain from those unlawful pleasures.

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§ 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, “ that if we look into histories for “ experience of what hath pass’d in the world since “ the first planting of christianity, we shall find far “ more particulars failing in propagating their kind, “ than their faith.” Do any histories confirm it to have been the experience of the world, that the far greatest part of the world did in any age give over propagating their kind? But histories do confirm that the far greatest part of the christian world did fall off to Arianism and Pelagianism; and consequently, as he supposeth, did desert and renounce tradition. Did ever whole nations and vast territories of the world either wholly, or for far the greatest part of them, take up an humour against propagating mankind? And yet both history, and the experience of the present age assures us, that a great part of Asia and of Africk (where the most flourishing churches in the world once were) are fallen off from christianity, and become either mahometans or heathens. In Africk almost all those vast regions, which christianity had from heathenism, mahometanism hath regained from christianity. All the north part of Africk lying along the

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* Hist.
Æthiop.

Mediterranean (where christianity flourished once as much as ever it did at Rome) is at this time utterly void of christians, excepting a few towns in the hands of the European princes. And not to mention all particular places, the large region of Nubia, which had (as is thought) from the apostles time professed the christian faith, hath within these 150 years for want of ministers (as Alvarez * tells us) quitted christianity, and is partly revolted to heathenism, partly fallen off to mahometanism. So that it seems, that notwithstanding the argument of hope and fear, the very teachers of tradition, may fail in a largely extended church. As for Asia, in the easterly parts of it, there is not now one christian to four of what there were 500 years ago; and in the more southerly parts of it (where christianity had taken the deepest root) the christians are far inferior in number to the idolaters and mahometans, and do daily decrease. What thinks Mr. S. of all this? Have those christian nations which are turn'd mahometans and pagans failed in their faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear instances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

§ 7. But, besides those who have totally apostatized from christianity, hath not the whole Greek church, with the jacobites and nestorians, and all these other sects, which agree with, and depend upon these, and which, taken together, are manifoldly greater than the Roman church; I say, have not all these renounced tradition for several ages? And here in Europe, hath not a great part of Poland, Hungary, both Germany's, France, and Switzerland: have not the kingdoms of Great-Britain, Denmark, Sweden,

Sweden, and a considerable part of Ireland in Mr. S's opinion deserted tradition? If I should once see a whole nation fail, because no body would marry and contribute to the propagation of mankind; and should find this sullen humour to prevail in several nations, and to overspread vast parts of the world, I should then in good earnest think it possible for mankind to fail; unless I could shew it impossible for other nations to do that which I see some to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever cause he assigns of heresy, " * as pride, ambition, lust," or any other vice or * P. 67. interest, if these can take place in whole nations, and make them renounce tradition, " then where's " the efficacy of the causes to preserve faith indefinitely entire in any?" For the demonstration holds as strongly for all christians as for any.

§ 8. Secondly, from these grounds it would follow that no christian can live wickedly; because the end of faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear must in all reason be as powerful and efficacious causes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his demonstration proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reasoning; for he * argues in this manner, " Good * P. 62. " is the proper object of the will; good proposed " makes the will to desire that good, and consequently " the known means to obtain it: now infinite goods " and harms sufficiently proposed are of their own " nature incomparably more powerful causes to carry " the will than temporal ones. Since then, when " two causes are counterpoised, the lesser, when it " comes to execution, is no cause as to the substance

PART " of that effect, it follows that there is no cause to
 III.

" move the wills of a world of believers to be
 " willing to do that which they judge would lose
 " themselves and their posterity infinite goods, and
 " bring them infinite harms, &c. in case a sufficient
 " proposal or application be not wanting," which
 • P. 65. he tells us * is not wanting, " because christianity
 " urged to execution gives its followers a new life
 " and a new nature, than which a nearer application
 " cannot be imagined." Doth not this argument
 extend to the lives of christians, as well as their be-
 lief? So that he may as well infer from these grounds,
 that it is impossible that those who profess christiani-
 ty should live contrary to it, as that they should fail to
 deliver down the doctrine of CHRIST; because what-
 ever can be an inducement and temptation to any
 man, to contradict this doctrine by his practice,
 may equally prevail upon him to falsify it. For why
 should men make any more scruple of damning
 themselves and their posterity by teaching them false
 doctrines, than by living wicked lives? which are
 equally pernicious with heretical doctrines, not only
 upon account of the bad influence which such examples
 of fathers and teachers are like to have upon their
 scholars, but likewise they are one of the strongest
 arguments in the world to persuade them, that their
 teachers do not themselves believe that religion which
 they teach; for if they did, they would live accord-
 ing to it. Why should any man think, that those
 arguments of hope and fear which will not prevail
 upon the generality of christians to make them live
 holy lives, should be so necessarily efficacious to
 make them so much concerned for the preserving of

a right belief? Nay, we have great reason to believe that such persons will endeavour as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their belief to their lives, And this is the true source of those innovations in faith, for which we challenge the church of Rome; which any man may easily discern, who will but consider how all their new doctrines are fitted to a secular interest, and a gratifying that inordinate appetite after riches and dominion which reigns in the court of Rome, and in the upper part of the clergy of that church.

SECT.
IV.

SECT. IV.

§ I. Secondly, the main grounds of his demonstration are apparently false: for,

The second answer to his demonstration.

First, this demonstration supposeth that the generality of christian parents in all ages perfectly understood the doctrine of CHRIST, and did not mistake any part of it; that they remembered it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to instruct their children in it; which is as contrary to experience as that the generality of christians are knowing and honest. It supposeth likewise, that this doctrine, and every substantial part of it, was received and remembered by the generality of children as it was taught; and was understood perfectly by them without the least material mistake: so he tells us, “ * that the substance of faith comes clad in such * P 53.
“ plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man
“ living cannot possibly be ignorant of it.” But whether this be reasonable to be supposed or no, may easily be determined, not only from every man’s
own

PART own experience of the world, but from a more ad-
III. vantageous instance of the experience of the first
 age of christianity. Was there ever a more know-
 ing and diligent teacher of this doctrine than our
 saviour? and yet his disciples fell into many mistakes
 concerning it: so that in order to the certain pro-
 pagating of it, the wisdom of God thought it re-
 quisite to endue even those who had learned this
 doctrine from himself with an infallible spirit, by
 which they might be led into all truth, and secured
 from error and mistake; which had been unneces-
 sary, had it been impossible for them to mistake
 this doctrine. The apostles, who taught the world
 by an infallible spirit, and with infinitely more ad-
 vantage than ordinary parents can teach their chil-
 dren, yet in all the churches which they planted,
 they found christians very apt to mistake and per-
 vert their doctrine, as appears by their frequent
 complaints in most of their epistles. Nay the apo-
 * Heb. v. stle chargeth the generality of the Hebrews * with
 11, 12. such a degree of dulness and stupidity, that after fit-
 ting time and means of instruction they were still
 ignorant of the very principles of christianity: so
 he tells them, " that when for the time they ought
 " to be teachers of others, they had need that one
 " should teach them again which be the first prin-
 " ples of the oracles of God." And St. Hierom
 * Advers. tells us, " * that the primitive churches were taint-
 Luciferian " ed with many gross errors whilst the apostles were
 " alive, and the blood of CHRIST yet warm in
 " Judea." But it may be there have been better
 teachers since, and children are more apt to learn
 now than men were then. Who knows how the
 world may be changed? § 2. Se-

§ 2. Secondly, this demonstration supposeth the hopes and fears which christian religion applies to mens minds to be certain and necessary causes of actual will in men to adhere to the doctrine of CHRIST; and consequently that they must necessarily adhere to it. That he supposeth them to be necessary, I have his own word for it; for he tells us, “ * that he hath endeavoured to demonstrate * P. 75.
“ the indefectibleness of tradition as the proper and
“ necessary effect of those causes which preserve and
“ continue tradition on foot;” and what those causes are he told us before, “ * that they are * P. 60.
“ hopes and fears strongly applied.” But I hope that the indefectibleness of tradition cannot be a necessary effect of the strong application of those hopes and fears, unless those hopes and fears be a necessary cause of that effect. And indeed this is sufficiently implied in his saying, “ that they are
“ the causes of actual will in christians to adhere to
“ tradition.” For if these causes of actual will be constant (as he must suppose) then they are certain and necessary and infallible causes of adhering to this doctrine. For whatever is in act is necessary while it is so, and if it be constantly in act, the effect is always necessary. But what a wild supposition is this, that moral motives and arguments working upon a free principle, the will of man, do necessarily produce their effect? Is it necessary that the hopes of heaven and the fears of hell should keep christians constant to the doctrine of CHRIST? and is it not as necessary that these arguments should prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonstrate that all men must

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must be good who have sufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reason impossible that moral arguments should be of a necessary and infallible efficacy, because they are always propounded to a free agent, who may choose whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reasonable that men should yield to them, and if they be reasonable they will; but so long as they are free, it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no virtue at all in them to be wrought upon by these arguments. For what virtue can it be in any man to entertain the christian doctrine, and adhere to it, and live accordingly, if he does all this necessarily, that is, whether he will or no, and can no more choose whether he will do so or not, than whether he will see the light when the sun shines upon his open eyes, or whether he will hear a sound when all the bells in the town are ringing in his ears, or (to use Mr. S's * similitudes) whether he will “ feel heat, cold, pain, “ pleasure, or any other material quality that affects “ his senses.” We see then how unreasonable his suppositions are, and yet without these grounds his demonstration falls. For if it be possible that christians may mistake or forget the doctrine of CHRIST, or any part of it, or be defective in diligence to instruct others in it; or if it be possible that the will of man which is free, may not be necessarily and infallibly swayed by the arguments of hope and fear; then it is possible that tradition may fail. And is not this a good demonstration which supports its self upon such principles as do directly
affront

* P. 53.

affront the constant experience, and the clearest reason of mankind? SECT.
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§ 3. And here I cannot but take notice how inconsistent he is to himself in laying the grounds of tradition's certainty. In one part of his book he tells us, " * that tradition hath for its basis the best * P. 53.
" nature in the universe, that is, man's ; not according to his moral part, defectible by reason
" of original corruption ; nor yet his intellectuals, darkly groping in the pursuit of science, &c.
" but according to those faculties in him perfectly and necessarily subject to the operations and strokes
" of nature, that is, his eyes, ears, handling, and the direct impression of knowledge, as naturally
" and necessarily issuing from the affecting those senses, as it is to feel heat, cold, pain, pleasure
" or any other material quality." So that according to this discourse, the basis of tradition is not man's nature considered as moral, and capable of intellectual reflection ; for in this consideration it is dark and defectible : but man's nature considered only as capable of direct, sensitive knowledge, as acting naturally and necessarily. Which is to say, that tradition is founded in the nature of man considered not as a man but a brute ; under which consideration, I see no reason why he should call it the best nature in the universe. But now, how will he reconcile this discourse with the grounds of his demonstrations ? where he tells us, that the stability of tradition is founded in the arguments of hope and fear, the objects of which being future and at a distance cannot work upon a man immediately by direct impressions upon his senses, but must work
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upon him by way of intellectual reflections and consideration. For I hope he will not deny but that the arguments of hope and fear work upon man according to his moral and intellectual part, else how are they arguments? and if man according to his moral part be (as he says) defectible, how can the indefectibility of tradition be founded in those arguments which work upon man only according to his moral part? I have purposely all along (both for the reader's ease and mine own) neglected to take notice of several of his inconsistencies; but these are such clear and transparent contradictions, that I could do no less than make an example of them.

S E C T. V.

§ I. **T**Hirdly, this Demonstration is confuted by clear and undeniable instances to the contrary. I will mention but two.

First, the tradition of the one true God, which was the easiest to be preserved of any doctrine in the World, being short and plain, planted in every man's nature, and perfectly suited to the reason of mankind. And yet this tradition, not having past through many hands (by reason of the long age of man) was so defaced and corrupted, that the world did lapse into polytheism and idolatry. Now a man that were so hardy as to demonstrate against matter of fact, might by a stronger demonstration than Mr. S's, prove that though it be certain this tradition hath failed, yet it was impossible it should fail; as Zeno demonstrated the impossibility of motion against Diogenes walking before his eyes. " For

" the

“ the doctrine of the one true God was settled in the
“ heart of Noah, and firmly believed by him to be
“ the way to happiness, and the contradicting or de-
“ serting of this to be the way to misery.” And
this doctrine was by him so taught to his children,
who were encouraged by these motives to adhere to
this doctrine, and to propagate it to their children,
and were deterred by them from relinquishing it.
And this was in all ages the persuasion of the faith-
ful. Now the hopes of happiness, and the fears of
misery strongly applied, are the causes of actual will.
Besides, the thing was feasible, or within their power;
that is, what they were bred to was knowable
by them, and that much more easily than any other
doctrine whatsoever, being short, and plain, and na-
tural. “ This put, it follows as certainly that a
“ great number in each age would continue to hold
“ themselves, and teach their children as themselves
“ had been taught, that is, would follow and stick
“ to this tradition of the one true God, as it doth
“ that a cause put actually causing produceth its ef-
“ fect. Actually I say; for since the cause is put,
“ and the patient disposed, it follows inevitably that
“ the cause is put still actually causing.” This de-
monstration which concludes an apparent falshood,
hath the whole strength of Mr. S’s, and several ad-
vantages beyond it. For the doctrine conveyed by
this tradition is the most important, being the first
principle of all religion; the danger of corrupting it
as great, the facility of preserving it much greater,
than of the christian doctrine, for the causes before-
mentioned. And yet, after all, it signifies nothing
against certain experience, and unquestionable matter

PART of fact; only it sufficiently shews the vanity of Mr. S's pretended demonstration, built upon the same or weaker grounds.

§ 2. Secondly, the other instance shall be in the Greek church, who received the christian doctrine as entire from the apostles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truly to posterity, and the same fears and hopes strongly applied to be the actual causes of will; in a word, all the same arguments and causes to preserve and continue tradition on foot, which the Roman church had; and yet, to the utter confusion of Mr. S's demonstration, tradition hath failed among them. For as speculators, they deny the procession of the HOLY GHOST from the SON; and as testifiers, they disown any such doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent age, or to any other age of their church by the apostles as the doctrine of CHRIST.

§ 3. To this instance of the Greek church, because Mr. White hath offered something by way of answer, I shall here consider it. He tells us, “* that the plea of the Greek church is non-tradition; alleging only this, that their fathers did not deliver the doctrine of the procession of the HOLY GHOST; not that they say the contrary; which clearly demonstrates there are no opposite traditions between them and us.” But this was not the thing Mr. White was concerned to do, to demonstrate there were no opposite traditions between the Greeks and the Latins, but to secure his main demonstration of the impossibility of tradition's failing against this instance. For that the Greeks have no such tradition as this, “ that the HOLY GHOST

“ pro-

* Apology for tradition, p. 51.

“ proceeds from the SON” is as good evidence of the ^{S E C T. V.} failure of tradition as if they had a positive tradition, “ that he proceeds only from the FATHER;” especially if we consider that they * charge the Latin church * ^{Phoc.} with innovation in this matter, and say that the addition ^{ep. 7.} of that clause, “ of the procession from the SON also,” is a corruption of the ancient faith, and a devilish invention. Why then does Mr. White go about to baffle so material an objection (and, I fear, his own conscience likewise) by a pitiful evasion instead of a solid answer? What though there be no opposite traditions between the Greek and Latin church, yet if their faith be opposite, will it not from hence follow that tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. White, who hath so very well confuted the infallibility of popes and councils, and thereby undermined the very foundation of that religion, should not by the same light of reason discover the fondness of his own opinion concerning the infallibility of oral tradition, which hath more and greater absurdities in it than that which he confutes. And to shew Mr. White the absurdity of it, I will apply his demonstration of the infallibility of christian tradition in general, to the Greek church in particular; by which every one will see that it does as strongly prove the impossibility of tradition’s failing in the Greek church, as in the Roman-catholick, as they are pleased to call it. His demonstration is this, “ * CHRIST commanded his apostles to preach * ^{De fid. & theol. tract 1. sect. 4.} to all the world, and lest any one should doubt “ of the effect, he sent his SPIRIT into them to bring “ to their remembrance what he had taught them; “ which SPIRIT did not only give them a power to “ do

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“ do what he inclined them to, but did cause them
 “ actually to do it.” I cannot but take notice by
 the way, of the ill consequence of this, which is,
 that men may doubt whether those who are to teach
 the doctrine of CHRIST will remember it, and teach
 it to others, unless they have that extraordinary
 and efficacious assistance of the HOLY GHOST which
 the apostles had : if this be true, his demonstration is
 at an end, for he cannot plead that this assistance
 hath been continued ever since the apostles. He pro-
 ceeds, “ the apostles preached this doctrine; the na-
 “ tions understood it, lived according to it, and
 “ valued it as that which was necessary to them and
 “ their posterity, incomparably beyond any thing
 “ else.” All this I suppose done to and by the
 Greeks as well as any other nation. “ These things
 “ being put, it cannot enter into any man’s under-
 “ standing, but that the christian [Greeks] of the
 “ first age, being the scholars of the apostles, could
 “ and would earnestly commend the christian doc-
 “ trine to their posterity; if so, it is evident that they
 “ did. So that the continuance of purity of the
 “ faith in the [Greek] church is founded upon this,
 “ that fathers always delivered the same doctrine to
 “ their children which they had received from their
 “ fathers, and did believe it under this very notion
 “ and title as received; nor could any one [of that
 “ church] deliver another doctrine under this title,
 “ but he would be convinced of a lye by the rest;
 “ and if the whole [Greek] church should endeavour
 “ to deliver a new doctrine under that title, [and
 “ there’s the same reason if they should leave out
 “ any article of the old doctrine] that whole age
 “ would

“ would be in their consciences condemned of per-
“ fidiousness and parricide. Now this is as impos-
“ sible as it is that all mankind should conspire to
“ kill themselves.” And he afterwards * gives the * Ibid.
reason why it is so impossible that tradition should ^{sect 5.}
fail, and it is a very bold and saucy one, “ that if
“ the tradition of the christian faith be not more
“ firm than the course of the sun and moon, and
“ the propagation of mankind, then God hath
“ shewn himself an unskilful artificer.” What is
there in all this demonstration, which may not be
accommodated to the Greek church with as much
force and advantage as to the catholick? unless he
can shew that it is very possible that all the men in
Greece may conspire to kill themselves, but yet ab-
solutely impossible that all the men in the world
should do so; which I am sure he cannot shew, un-
less he can demonstrate, that though it be possible
for a million of as wise men as any are to be found
in the world together, to conspire to do a foolish ac-
tion, yet it is impossible that a hundred millions
not one jot wiser than the other, should agree to-
gether to the doing of it.

§ 4. From all this it appears, that Mr. White’s
answer to this objection doth not signify any thing
to his purpose. For if the procession of the HOLY
GHOST was part of CHRIST’s doctrine, then it was
delivered by the apostles to the Greek church; if so,
they could not fail to deliver it down to the next age,
and that to the next, and so on; but it seems they
have failed. “ Where then is the force of hopes and
“ fears strongly applied? where are the certain
“ causes of actual will to adhere to this doctrine?
“ why

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- “ why is not the effect produced, the causes being
 “ put actually causing ?” If the apostles delivered this
 doctrine, oral tradition is so clear and unmistakable,
 * P. 53, & “ and * brings down faith clad in such plain matters
 54. “ of fact, that the most stupid man living (much
 “ less the Greeks, that were the flower of mankind)
 * Ibid. “ could not possibly be ignorant of it ; nay *, it ex-
 “ ceeds all the power of nature to blot knowledge
 “ thus fixed out of the soul of one single believer
 * P. 78. “ (much more of so vast a church) And * since
 “ no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or
 “ doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate
 “ without knowing he did so, 'tis a manifest impos-
 “ sibility, a whole church should in any age fall into
 “ an absurdity so inconsistent with the nature of one
 * P. 86. “ single man. And since * 'tis natural for every
 “ man to speak truth, and grace is to perfect nature
 “ in whatever is good in it, it follows that one truly
 “ christian heart is far more fixed to veracity, than
 “ others not imbued with these heavenly tenets ; and
 “ consequently that a multitude of such must incom-
 “ parably exceed in point of testifying the same num-
 “ ber of others, unfortified by CHRIST's doctrine.”
 * P. 89. And since “ * such a thought cannot enter into the
 “ most depraved nature, as to harm another without
 “ any good to himself, and yet this must be if we
 “ put christian fathers mis-teaching their children un-
 “ received doctrines for received (and I hope for the
 “ same reason, received doctrines for unreceived) con-
 “ trary to their knowledge. For supposing sanctity
 “ in the (Greek) church (and why may we not as
 “ well as in the Latin) that is, that multitudes in it
 “ make heaven their first love, and look on spiritual
 “ goods,

“ goods, as their main concern, &c. it follows, that SECT.
V.
“ had the fathers of that church, in any age, consented
“ to mislead their posterity from what themselves (not
“ only) conceived (but knew) to be true, they should do
“ the most extreme harm imaginable to others with-
“ out any the least good to themselves: which is per-
“ haps impossible in one single man, more in few, but
“ infinitely in a multitude, especially of good men.”

§ 5. Thus I might apply the rest of his ranting
rhetorick (but that I am weary of transcribing it)
concerning “ * the natural love of parents to their * P. 90;
“ children” (unless we suppose the Greek church de-^{91.}
stitute of it) which must needs engage them to use
the means proper to bring them to heaven, and save
them from hell: as also concerning “ the natural care
“ men have of not losing their credit by telling per-
“ nicious lies.” And, not to omit the best part of
his demonstration * (which was therefore prudently * P. 93;
reserved to the last place) I might likewise shew
“ how the principles of each science, arithmetick,
“ geometry, logick, nature, morality, historical pru-
“ dence, politicks, metaphysicks, divinity, and last
“ of all the new science of controversy (as he calls it)
“ or the blessed art of eternal wrangling and disput-
“ ing (the first principle whereof (he tells us) is, that
“ tradition is certain) do all contribute to shew the
“ certainty of tradition,” that is, the impossibility
that any part of CHRIST’s doctrine should fail in the
Greek church any more than in the Latin. And
surely arithmetick, geometry, logick, natural philo-
sophy, metaphysicks, &c. will all stand up for the
Greek church in this quarrel; for considering that
Greece was the place where the arts and sciences were

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born and bred, it is not to be imagined that they should be so disingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their best assistance to the service of their country.

§ 6. But it may be the Greeks cannot so justly pretend to oral tradition as the Latins. What if St. Peter, the head of the apostles, thought fit to share scripture and tradition between these two churches, and laying his left hand on the Greek church, and his right on the Latin, was pleased to confer the great blessing of oral tradition upon the Latin church? which being to be the seat of infallibility, it was but fitting, that she should be furnished with this infallible way of conveying the christian doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the scriptures of the new testament were left in Greek, so oral tradition was delivered down only in Latin. This, I confess, is not altogether without some shew of reason: Mr. S. may do well to take the matter into his deeper consideration; he hath in his time improved as weak probabilities as these into lusty demonstrations. And if he could but demonstrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this instance of the Greek church: otherwise (for ought I see) this instance will hold good against him; and whatever he can say for the impossibility of tradition's failing in the Latin church, may all be said of the Greek church; if he will but grant that the apostles preached the same doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear which this doctrine contains in it, were applied as strongly to the Greeks as to the Latins. And yet notwithstanding all this, tradition hath plainly failed in the Greek church. Let him now assign the age wherein

wherein so vast a number of men conspired to leave out the article of the procession of the HOLY GHOST, and shew how it was possible a whole age could conspire together to damn their posterity, or how the faith of immediate forefathers might be altered without any such conspiracy, and we are ready to satisfy him how the doctrine of the Latin church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what age it was done. And until he do this, I would intreat him to trouble us no more with those canting questions (wherein yet the whole force of his demonstration lies). How is it possible a whole age should conspire to change the doctrine of their forefathers? And in what age was this done? For if it be reasonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his demonstration, to assign the particular age wherein the Latin church conspired to change the ancient doctrine; with the same reason we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his demonstration, to name the particular age wherein the Greek church conspired to alter the doctrine of CHRIST (which was undoubtedly in the first age truly delivered to them by the apostles) and also to shew from the rational force and strength of tradition, how it is more impossible for the whole church to have failed in transmitting the doctrine of CHRIST down to us, or to have conspired to the altering of it, than for such a multitude of christians as is the vast body of the Greek church. If Mr. S. or Mr. White shew this, they do something; otherwise, I must tell them, that unless they can manage these pretty things they call demonstrations better, they must shortly either quit their reason, or their religion; or else return to

PART III. the honest old *mumpsimus* of the infallibility of the church from an extraordinary and immediate assistance of the HOLY GHOST: or (to make the business short, and stop all gaps with one bush) come over to the jesuits, and acknowledge the pope's infallibility both in matters of faith and fact; by which means they may reconcile themselves to him, and prevent that direful stroke which threatens them from Rome, and is ready to cut them off from the body of the traditionary church. And thus I have done with his first demonstration: and I take it for a good sign that the popish cause is at a very low ebb, when such stuff as this must be called demonstration.

S E C T. VI.

Mr. S's
demonstra-
tion *à poste-
riori*.

§ 1. I Come now to his demonstration *à posteriori*, which, although it fall of it self if the demonstration *à priori* fail, yet because it hath some peculiar absurdities of its own, I shall consider it by it self as well as with relation to the other.

§ 2. Before he comes to lay it down with the grounds of it, according to his usual fashion, he premiseth something as yielded by protestants, which, in his sense, no protestant ever granted. Just so he dealt with us before concerning the scriptures, saying, "that by them the protestants must mean unsensed letters and characters." But let us see what it is.

* P. 76. " * That this demonstration *à posteriori*, seems a
" needless endeavour against the protestants, who
" yield that those points in which we agree, as the
" trinity, incarnation, &c. came down by this way
" of tradition: and this (he saith) no protestant

" ever

“ ever denied.” And then he asks, “ whether the
“ same virtue of tradition would not have been as
“ powerful to bring down other points in which we
“ do not agree, had any such been ?” Now if he
speak any thing to his own purpose, he must suppose
protestants to yield that all those points wherein we
are agreed, were conveyed down to us solely by oral
tradition without writing : but this all protestants de-
ny. So that that only which would avail his cause
against us, is to shew, that those points wherein we
differ, have not only come down to us by oral teach-
ing, but that they are likewise contained in scripture,
without which, we say, we can have no sufficient cer-
tainty and assurance at this distance, that they were
the doctrine of CHRIST, and that they were not ei-
ther totally innovated, or else corrupted in the con-
veyance from what they were at first. And if he
can shew this concerning any point in difference,
I promise to yield it to him.

§ 3. I come now to his demonstration, which I
shall set down in his own words with the principles
upon which it relies. “ * The effect then we will * P. 77.
“ pitch upon, and avow to be the proper one of such ^{78.}
“ a cause, is the present persuasion of traditionary
“ christians (or catholicks) that their faith hath de-
“ scended from CHRIST and his apostles uninterrup-
“ tedly, which we find most firmly rooted in their
“ heart ; and the existence of this persuasion we af-
“ firm to be impossible without the existence of tra-
“ dition’s ever indeficiency to beget it. To prove
“ this, I lay this first principle, that age which
“ holds her faith thus delivered from the apostles,
“ neither can itself have changed any thing in it, nor
“ know

PART III. “ know or doubt that any age since the apostles
 “ had changed or innovated therein. The second
 “ principle shall be this: no age could innovate
 “ any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to
 “ posterity as received from CHRIST by continual
 “ succession.” The sum of which is this, that be-
 cause a present multitude of christians (viz. the Roman
 church) are persuaded, that CHRIST’s doctrine hath
 descended to them solely by an uninterrupted oral
 tradition, therefore this persuasion is an effect which
 cannot be attributed to any other cause but the in-
 deficiency of oral tradition. For if neither the pre-
 sent age, nor any age before, could make any change
 or innovation, then the persuasion of the present
 age is a plain demonstration that this doctrine was
 always the same, and consequently that tradition
 cannot fail.

§ 4. In answer to this, I shall endeavour to make
 good these four things.

First, that these principles wholly rely upon the
 truth of the grounds of his demonstration *à priori*.

Secondly, that these principles are not sufficiently
 proved by him.

Thirdly, that doctrines and practices, which must
 be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made
 the same pretence to uninterrupted tradition.

Fourthly, that it is not the present persuasion of
 the church of Rome, (whom he calls the traditio-
 nary christians) nor ever was, that their faith hath
 descended to them solely by oral tradition. If I can
 now make good these four things, I hope his de-
 monstration is at an end.

S E C T.

The RULE of FAITH.

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SECT.
VII.

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§ 1. **T**HAT these principles wholly rely upon the truth of the grounds of his demonstration *à priori*. For if the doctrine of CHRIST was either imperfectly taught in any age, or mistaken by the learners, or any part of it forgotten (as it seems the whole Greek church have forgot that fundamental point of the procession of the HOLY GHOST, as the Roman church accounts it) or if the arguments of hope and fear be not necessary causes of actual will to adhere to tradition, then there may have been changes and innovations in any age, and yet men may pretend to have followed tradition. But I have shewn, that ignorance, and negligence, and mistake, and pride, and lust, and ambition, and any other vice or interest, may hinder those causes from being effectual to preserve tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do so, it is not to be expected that those persons who innovate and change the doctrine, should acknowledge that their new doctrines are contrary to the doctrine of CHRIST; but that they should at first advance them as pious, and after they have prevailed and gained general entertainment, then impudently affirm that they were the very doctrines which CHRIST delivered; which they may very securely do, when they have it in their power to burn all that shall deny it.

The first
answer to
his second
demonstra-
tion.

§ 2. I will give a clear instance of the possibility of this in the doctrine of transubstantiation, by shewing how this might easily come in, in the ninth
or

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or tenth age after CHRIST. We will suppose then that about this time, when universal ignorance, and the genuine daughter of it (call her devotion or superstition) had overspread the world; and the generality of people were strongly inclined to believe strange things; and even the greatest contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of mysteries, being told by their priests and guides, that the more contradictory any thing is to reason, the greater merit there is in believing it: I say, let us suppose, that in this state of things one or more of the most eminent then in the church, either out of design, or out of superstitious ignorance and mistake of the sense of our SAVIOUR's words used in the consecration of the sacrament, should advance this new doctrine, that the words of consecration, "this is my body," are not to be understood by any kind of trope (as the like forms in scripture are, "as I am the vine, I am the door," which are plain tropes) but being used about this great mystery of the sacrament ought in all reason to be supposed to contain in them some notable mystery; which they will do, if they be understood of a real change of the substance of bread and wine, made by virtue of these words, into the real body and blood of our SAVIOUR; and in all this, I suppose nothing but what is so far from being impossible, that it is too usual for men, either out of ignorance or interest, to advance new opinions in religion. And such a doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious clergy of that time, as a probable means to draw in the people to a greater veneration of them; which advantage Mr. Rushworth *

* Dial. 1.
sect. 4.

seems

seems to be very sensible of, when he tells us, S E C T. VII.
that the power of the priest in this particular " is
" such a privilege, as if all the learned clerks that
" ever lived since the beginning of the world should
" have studied to raise, advance, and magnify some
" one state of men to the highest pitch of reve-
" rence and eminency, they could never (without
" special light from heaven) have thought of any
" thing comparable to this." I am of his mind,
that it was a very notable device, but (I am apt to
think) invented without any special light from hea-
ven. Nor was such a doctrine less likely to take
and prevail among the people in an age prodigi-
ously ignorant, and strongly inclined to superstition,
and thereby well prepared to receive the grossest
absurdities under the notion of mysteries; especially
if they were such as might seem to conciliate a
greater honour and reverence to the sacrament.
Now supposing such a doctrine as this, so fitted to
the humour and temper of the age, to be once as-
serted, either by chance or out of design, it would
take like wildfire; especially if by some one or
more who bore sway in the church, it were but
recommended with convenient gravity and solemnity.
And although Mr. Rushworth says, " * it is * Dial. 3.
" impossible that the authority of one man should sect. 7.
" sway so much in the world, because (says he)
" surely the devil himself would rather help the
" church, than permit so little pride among men;"
yet I am not so thoroughly satisfied with this cun-
ning reason: for though he delivers it confidently,
and with a surely, yet I make some doubt whether
the devil would be so forward to help the church;

PART III. nay, on the contrary, I am inclined to think that he would rather choose to connive at this humble and obsequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of religion, than cross a design so dear to him by unseasonable temptations to pride: so that notwithstanding Mr. Rushworth's reason, it seems very likely that such a doctrine, in such an age, might easily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great persons in the church. For nothing can be more suitable to the easy and passive temper of superstitious ignorance, than to entertain such a doctrine with all imaginable greediness, and to maintain it with a proportionable zeal. And if there be any wiser than the rest, who make objections against it, as if this doctrine were new and full of contradictions, they may easily be born down by the stream, and by the eminency, and authority, and pretended sanctity of those who are the heads of this innovation. And when this doctrine is generally swallowed, and all that oppose it are looked upon and punished as hereticks, then it is seasonable to maintain that this doctrine was the doctrine of forefathers; to which end it will be sufficient to those who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three sayings of the ancients to that purpose. And as for the contradictions contained in this doctrine, it was but telling the people then (as they do in effect now) that contradictions ought to be no scruple in the way of faith; that the more impossible any thing is, 'tis the fitter to be believed; that it is not praise-worthy to believe plain possibilities, but that this is the gallantry and heroic power of faith, this is the way to oblige God
almighty

almighty for ever to us, to believe flat and down-
right contradictions: "for God requires at the
" people's hands (as Mr. Rushworth * tells us) a
" credulity of things above and beyond nature; nay,
" beyond all the fables, be it spoken with respect,
" that ever man invented." After this doctrine
had proceeded thus far, and by the most inhumane
severities and cruelties suppress'd dissenters, or in a
good measure rooted them out; then, if they please,
even this new word transubstantiation may pretend
also to antiquity, and in time be confidently vouch-
ed for a word used by christians in all ages, and
transmitted down to them by those from whom
they received the doctrine of the sacrament as a
term of art appendant to it. And when a super-
stitious church and designing governors have once
gained this post, and by means of this enormous
article of transubstantiation have sufficiently debauch-
ed the minds of men, and made a breach in their
understandings wide enough for the entertaining of
any error, though ever so gross and senseless; then
innovations come in a main, and by sholes; and the
more absurd and unreasonable any thing is, it is
for that very reason the more proper matter for an
article of faith. And if any of these innovations be
objected against, as contrary to former belief and
practice, it is but putting forth a lusty act of faith
and believing another contradiction, that though
they be contrary, yet they are the same.

§ 3. And there is nothing in all this but what is
agreeable both to history and experience. For that
the ninth and tenth ages, and those which followed
them till the reformation, were thus prodigiously igno-

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* Dial. 1.
sect. 4.

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rant and superstitious, is confirmed by the unanimous consent of all histories; and even by those writers, that have been the greatest pillars of their own religion. And experience tells us, that in what age soever there are a great company of superstitious people, there will never be wanting a few crafty fellows to make use of this easy and pliable humour to their own ends. Now that this was the state of those ages of the church, will be evident to any from these testimonies. Platina * writes of pope Romanus, that he null'd the acts of his predecessor Stephanus: “ for
 “ (says he) these popes minded nothing else but how
 “ they might extinguish both the name and dignity
 “ of their predecessors.” And if so, who can doubt but that these popes who made it their business to destroy the very memory of their ancestors, would be very little careful to preserve the doctrine of forefathers. But what the care of those times was in this particular, may be conjectured from what Onuphrius * says by way of confutation of that passage in Platina, concerning pope Joan’s reading publicly at Rome at her first coming thither. “ This (says he)
 “ is utterly false, for there was nothing that they were
 “ less solicitous about in those times, than to furnish
 “ the city with any publick teachers.” And the time which Onuphrius speaks of, was much about the beginning of the tenth century. Phil. Burgomensis * says, “ it happened in that age, through the sloth-
 “ fulness of men, that there was a general decay of
 “ virtue both in the head and members.” Again,
 “ * these times, through the ambition and cruel tyrann-
 “ ny of the popes, were extremely unhappy—for the
 “ popes setting aside the fear of God and his wor-
 ship,

* In vit.
Romani
pape, 117
A.C. 900.

* In Pla-
tin.

* Anno
906.

* Anno
908.

“ ship, fell into such enmities among themselves as SECT. VII.
“ cruel tyrants exercise towards one another.” Sa-
bellicus * says, “ it is wonderful to observe what a * Ennead.
“ strange forgetfulness of all arts did about this time 9. l. 1. anno 900.
“ seize upon men ; infomuch that neither the popes,
“ nor other princes, seemed to have any sense or ap-
“ prehension of any thing that might be useful to
“ humane life. There were no wholsom laws, no
“ reparations of churches, no pursuit of liberal arts ;
“ but a kind of stupidity and madness, and forgetful-
“ ness of manners had possessed the minds of men.”
And a little after, “ I cannot (says he) but much won-
“ der from whence these tragical examples of popes
“ should spring ; and how their minds should come
“ to be so devoid of all piety, as neither to regard
“ the person which they sustained, nor the place they
“ were in.” Sigonius * speaking of these times, * De reg.
about the beginning of the tenth century, calls Ital. l. 6.
them “ the foulest and blackest, both in respect of
“ the wickedness of princes, and the madness of the
“ people that are to be found in all antiquity.” Ge-
nebrard * speaking of the same time : “ this (says * Chron.
“ he) is called the unhappy age ; being destitute of l. 4.
“ men eminent for wit and learning, as also of fa-
“ mous princes and popes. In this time there was
“ scarce any thing done worthy to be remembered by
“ posterity.” And he adds afterwards, “ but chiefly
“ unhappy in this one thing, that for almost an hun-
“ dred and fifty years together, about fifty popes did
“ utterly degenerate from the virtue of their ances-
“ tors.” He should have added farther, but even to
a miracle. happy in another respect, that during this
long and total degeneracy from the piety and virtue
of

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of their ancestors, they did not in the least swerve from them in matter of faith and doctrine : a thing incredible, were there not demonstration for it. Werner * gives this character of that time ; “ about the “ year of our LORD one thousand there began an “ effeminate time, in which the christian faith began to degenerate exceedingly, and to decline from “ its ancient vigour ; infomuch that in many countries of christendom, neither sacraments nor ecclesiastical rites were observed.—And people were given to soothsaying and witchcraft, and the priest “ was like the people.” It seems by this testimony, that tradition did falter a little in that age, else the christian faith could not possibly have degenerated and declined so very much : and (which threatens Mr. S’s demonstration most of all) “ that the practical tradition of sacraments, and other ecclesiastical observances, did fail in many christian countries.”

* Epist. Gerbert *, who lived in that time, gives this short character of the Roman church, in an epistle of his to Stephen, deacon of that church, “ the world stands “ amazed at the manners of Rome.” But most full is the complaint of a great prelate of the church * concerning those times ; “ in the west (says he) and almost “ most all the world over (especially among those “ who were called the faithful) faith failed, and there “ was no fear of GOD among them ; (it seems the argument of fear had lost its force) justice was perished from among men, and violence prevailing “ against equity governed the nations. Fraud, deceit, and the arts of cozenage were grown universal. All kind of virtue gave way as an useless “ thing, and wickedness supplied its place. The “ world

* Fascic.
tempor.

* Epist.
40.

* Bell.
sacr. l. 1.
c. 8.

“ world seemed to be declining apace towards its
 “ evening, and the second coming of the son of man
 “ to draw near : for love was grown cold, and faith
 “ was not found upon earth. All things were in
 “ confusion, and the world looked as if it would re-
 “ turn to its old chaos.—All sorts of fornication
 “ were committed with the same freedom as if
 “ they had been lawful actions; for men neither
 “ blushed at them, nor were punished for them.
 “ —Nor did the clergy live better than the people.
 “ —For the bishops were grown negligent of the
 “ duty of their place, &c. In a word, men ran them-
 “ selves headlong into all vice, and all flesh had cor-
 “ rupted its way.” And farther, to shew the great
 neglect of priests and bishops in the work of teaching
 and instructing (which is so necessary to the preserv-
 ing of tradition inviolable) I will add the testimony of
 one * who lived in those times; who tells us, “ that
 “ in those days the priests and bishops, who ought to
 “ have been the pillars of the church, were so negli-
 “ gent that they did not mind the divine scripture;
 “ nor take any care to teach and instruct scholars that
 “ might succeed them, as we read holy men had used
 “ to do, who left many scholars perfectly instructed
 “ to be their successors.” If they had only neglected
 the scriptures, all might have been well enough; but it
 seems they took no care to instruct people “ in the way
 “ of oral tradition, not to furnish the church with a new
 “ generation of able teachers, who might deliver down
 “ from hand to hand the sense and faith of forefathers.”

* Elfric.
serm. ad
sacerdot.

This last testimony the late learned lord primate of Ire-
 land, bishop Usher (in his book *de christian. eccles. suc-*
cess. &c. * where several of the testimonies I have pro-

* C. 2. &
duced, 3.

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duced, with many more to the same purpose, may be seen) cites out of a MS. in Bennet college library in Cambridge; concerning the authority of which MS. there need be no dispute between Mr. S. and me; because the whole force and effect of this testimony is sufficiently contained in those citations which I have brought out of publick and unquestionable books.

§ 4. All these testimonies which I have produced are, in general and for the substance of them, confirmed by two of the greatest props of the Romish church, Bellarmine and Baronius. Bellarmine * says of this tenth age, "that there was never any either more unlearned or more unhappy. Baronius speaks more particularly; "what was then the face of the Roman church? how deformed? when whores, no less powerful than vile, bore the chief sway at Rome; and at their pleasure changed sees, appointed bishops; and (which it is horrible to mention) did thrust into St. Peter's see their own galleys, false popes, who would not have been mentioned in the catalogue of the Roman popes, but only for the more distinct recording of so long a succession of times." And a little after, "CHRIST was then (it seems) in a very deep sleep—And which was worse; when the LORD was thus asleep there were no disciples to awaken him, being themselves all fast asleep. What kind of cardinals, presbyters, and deacons, can we think were chosen by these monsters, when nothing is so natural as for every one to propagate his own likeness?" It is very much that these lewd women, and their favourite popes, cardinals, and bishops, who then swayed the church, should, when they were so careless of their own

*De Rom.
pontif. l. 4.
c. 12.

* Annal.
tom. 10.
anno 900.

own souls, be so tender of the salvation of posterity; SECT. VII.
and when they administered all other affairs of the church so extravagantly, should be so careful of the main chance, as to transmit the christian doctrine entire and uncorrupted to succeeding ages. Yet Mr. S. hath demonstrated this *à posteriori*, which seems so very strange to a man that considers things *à priori*.

§ 5. But it may be this dismal state of the Roman church lasted but a little while; and she did in the same age, before tradition could be interrupted, recover herself out of this degenerate condition. I will therefore enquire a little into the state of succeeding times. And I find in the thirteenth century, St. Bernard * complaining, that the degeneracy of the priests was in his days greater than ever; “ we * In convers. sancti Pauli. serm. 1.
“ cannot (says he) now say, as is the people so is the priest; for the people are not so bad as their priests.” In the fifteenth century, Nic. de Clemangiis, who lived in that time, wrote a book upon this argument, “ of the corrupt state of the church;” by which we may make some judgment whether in that age it was (as Mr. S. says) impossible but that the christian doctrine should be entirely preserved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He says, “ * there was an universal degeneracy in the church, * C. 3.
“ from the very head of it to its lowest members.” In the same chapter he complains, “ who is there that preaches the gospel to the people? who shews them the way to salvation either by word or action?” It seems there was a great failure both of oral and practical tradition. Again *, speak- * C. 54
ing of the pope’s taking to himself the collation of all vacant bishopricks and dignities; he says, one
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- might think the pope did this, "that the church
 " might be provided of worthier governors, both
 " in respect of their learning, and their lives, did
 " not the thing itself declare the contrary, and that
 " ignorant and useleſs perſons (provided they had
 " money) were by ſimony advanced to the higheſt
 * C. 6. " degrees in the church." And * ſpeaking what a
 vaſt number of candidates there was uſually at Rome
 from all parts waiting for benefices and dignities, he
 tells us, " that many of theſe did not come from
 " their ſtudies, or from ſchools of learning, to go-
 " vern pariſhes; but from the plow, and from the
 " meaneſt profeſſions: and that they underſtood
 " Latin and Arabick much at the ſame rate; and
 " many of them could not read at all. But it may
 " be (ſays he) their manners were ſuch as might be
 " ſome excuſe for their ignorance. No; though
 " their learning was but little, their virtue was leſs;
 " for being brought up in idleneſs, they followed
 " nothing but debauchery and ſports, &c. Hence
 " it comes to paſs, that in all places there are ſo
 " many wicked, and wretched, and ignorant prieſts—
 " Hence it is that prieſts are ſo contemned by
 " the common people.—Formerly the prieſthood
 " was highly honoured by the people, and nothing
 " was more venerable than that order of men; but
 * C. 9. " now nothing is more vile and deſpicable.—* I
 " make no doubt, but there are now more thieves
 " and robbers, than true paſtors in the church.
 * C. 11. " —* Why ſhould any man now flatter himſelf
 " with hopes of preferment, becauſe of his virtue
 " or learning? Men do not now (as formerly)
 * C. 13. " riſe in the church by ſuch arts ———* Which of
 " thoſe

The RULE of FAITH.

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SECT.
VII.

“ those that are now-a-days advanced to the pontifical
“ dignity, hath so much as perfunctorily read, or
“ heard, or learnt the scriptures; yea, or ever
“ touched any more than the cover of the bible? ”

Again, * speaking of the prodigious covetousness of * C. 14.
the governors of the church, and the gross neglect
of their flocks, “ they would (says he) much more
“ contentedly bear the loss of ten thousand souls,
“ than of ten or twelve shillings. But why do
“ I say more contentedly? when without the
“ least trouble or disturbance to themselves, they
“ can bear the loss of souls; a thing so far from
“ their care, that it never enter’d into their thoughts.”

Had the hereticks of those days but had wit enough,
and a little money, they might (it seems) for a
small sum have hired the governors of the church to
have renounced tradition, or to have ceased to pro-
pagate it; though they had known that in so doing
they should have damned all their posterity. He
goes on, and tells us, “ that if there were perhaps
“ any one who did not take these courses, the rest
“ would snarl at him, call him fool, and say
“ he was unfit to be a priest. — So that the study
“ of the scriptures (together with the professors of
“ it) was turned into laughter and scorn by all; but
“ (which is prodigious) especially by the popes,
“ who prefer their own tradition many degrees be-
“ fore the commands of God.” I desire Mr. S.
to take notice in what kind of times tradition was
set up against scripture. Again, * speaking of the * C. 16.
choice of persons to be priests, he tells us, “ that
“ there was no enquiry made into their lives,
“ no question about their manners. As for their
“ learning

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- “ learning (says he) what need I speak of that?
 “ when we see the priests, almost universally, have
 “ much ado to read, though but in an hesitating
 “ and spelling fashion, drawing out one syllable af-
 “ ter another, without understanding either the
 “ sense of what they read, or the words.” I am
 now reconciled to oral tradition, and convinced that
 there was great need of it in those ages in which
 scarce any of the priests could either write or read.
- * C. 20, I omit the particulars of what he says, “ * con-
 21, 23. “ cerning the common drunkenness and inconti-
 “ nency of priests, who (because they made con-
 “ science of marriage) kept whores in their houses;
 “ concerning the dissolute lives of monks; and con-
 “ cerning nunneries, which instead of being the
 “ sanctuaries of God, were the abominable stews
 “ of Venus, and the receptacles of lascivious young
 “ men;” insomuch (says he) “ that at this day
 “ it is the same thing to put a virgin into a nunnery,
 “ and to make her a common strumpet.” And to
 shew that he does not speak these things of a few, but
 with relation to the general corruption of that age,
 he adds, “ * that wickedness did so abound in all
 * C. 27. “ orders of men, that scarce one among a thou-
 “ sand was to be found who did truly live up to his
 “ profession: and if there was any one that did not
 “ follow these lewd courses, he became ridiculous to
 “ others, and was branded either as an insolent sin-
 “ gular madman, or an hypocrite.” I will con-
 clude this long testimony with the character which
 * C. 26. he gives * of one of the popes of his time, Clement
 by name, viz. “ That he did chiefly apply himself
 “ to gratify and oblige all the parasites and buf-
 foons

“foons that had any interest in the several courts SECT. VII.

“of princes: and to this end, did confer upon these,
“and upon handsom young boys (which he much
“delighted in) almost all the vacant bishopricks, and
“most of the other church dignities.” It is well that
oral tradition hath the security of infallibility, other-
wise it had in all probability been lost among this
lewd sort of people, which yet they gravely call
the holy roman catholick church.

§ 6. To this effect I might have produced testi-
monies concerning every age from the ninth to
the sixteenth; but Mr. Cressy hath saved me that
labour, who acknowledges, “* that these worst * Exom-
“times of the church, when ignorance, worldliness, log. c. 68.
“pride, tyranny, &c. reigned with so much scope;
“when the popes (so wicked, so abominable in their
“lives) enjoyed so unlimited a power even over se-
“cular princes themselves, and much more over the
“clergy:” I say, he acknowledges that these worst
times continued during the space of about six ages
before Luther: a competent time (one would think)
for tradition to have miscarried in, were it not (as
Mr. S. says) indefectible. Mr. Cressy indeed tells
us, “* that this was to him an irrefragable testimo- * Ibid.
“ny of a strange watchfulness of divine provi-
“dence over the church, to preserve it from the
“gates of hell (that is, established and dangerous
“errors) during these worst times.” And very
likely it is that this might appear so to such a ca-
tholick, “whose judgment, he tells us, it is to
“renounce his own judgment:” but it will never
appear irrefragable to any man that hath his judg-
ment about him, unless Mr. Cressy can prove, that
by

PART by that phrase, viz. the gates of hell, the scripture
III. does not mean gross wickedness of life, as well as dangerous errors in opinion; and likewise, that a general viciousness and debauchery of manners is not as pernicious to christianity, and as destructive to the end of it, as established errors in doctrine. And if so, that the providence of God is not equally concerned to preserve the church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved these three things, then this declamatory discourse of his may signify something, but not before.

§ 7. Now if this be a true representation of the state of the Roman church in those ages, was not this a very fit time for the devil to play his pranks in? Will any man that reads those testimonies, think it impossible that the doctrine of CHRIST should have been depraved in this age; or that the most senseless and absurd tenets might then be brought in under the notion of christian doctrines? when scarce any one knew what the doctrine of CHRIST was: when a general ignorance of letters, and almost an universal stupidity and madness had seized upon the minds of men: when there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of virtue and piety both in the head and members of the church: when the lives of the popes were tragically wicked, and no footsteps of piety appeared in them: when for about 150 years together, in a continued succession of 50 popes, there was scarce one pious and virtuous man (or woman) sat in that chair: when the whores governed Rome, and put out, and put in bishops at their pleasure; and made their own gallants popes, who would be sure to
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make a college of cardinals of such monsters as SECT. VII.
 themselves: when pretty boys, and parasites, and buffoons, led the head of the church by the nose, and were gratified with the best bishopricks and dignities in the church: when there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the christian faith, when in many countries neither sacraments, nor other ecclesiastical rites were observed: when violence and fraud, and all the arts of deceit and cozenage, and blacker arts than these, were the common study and practice: when intemperance, and all kind of lewdness and debauchery, reigned in all sorts and orders of men: when the generality of bishops and priests (who, according to Mr. Rushworth *, can only teach the traditionary * Dial. 3. doctrine) were ignorant in the scriptures, and in sect. 3. every thing else (very few of them being able so much as to read tolerably) and did neglect to teach the people, and to breed up any in knowledge to succeed them in their office; and in the lewdness of their lives did surpass the vilest of the people: was not such an age a fit season to plant the doctrine of transubstantiation in? Or if any thing more monstrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what weeds would not have grown in so rank a soil? Doth Mr. S. think it impossible, that those that were born in the church then should be ignorant of the doctrine of CHRIST, when scarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when so few understood and fewer practised it? when prodigious impiety and wickedness did overspread the church from the pope down to the meanest

PART meanest of the laity, can any one believe that men generally made conscience to instruct their children in the true faith of *CHRIST*? Was it impossible there should be any neglect of this duty, when all others failed? That there should be any mistake about the doctrine of *CHRIST*, when there was so much ignorance: unless he be of Mr. Rushworth's * mind, * Dial. 3. sect. 7. “ who reckons ignorance among the parents of religion.” Where were then the arguments of hope and fear? were they strongly applied, or were they not? were they causes of actual will in christians to believe well when they lived so ill? or is christianity only fitted to form mens minds to a right belief, but of no efficacy to govern their lives? Hath *CHRIST* taken care to keep his church from error, but not from vice? as the great cardinal Perron * (stooping below his own wit and reason to serve a bad cause) tells us, * Reply to K. James, l. 4. c. 6. “ that the church sings, and will sing to the end of “ the world, I am black, but I am fair; that is to “ say, I am black in manners, but fair in doctrine.” As if the meaning of the prophecies and promises of the scripture made to the church were this, that by the extraordinary care of God’s providence, and peculiar assistance of his *HOLY SPIRIT*, she should be wicked, but orthodox to the end of the world. Where were then the vigorous causes imprinting *CHRIST*’s doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at Rome than any where else; and of securing that see and its supreme pastor in the faith and practice of the christian doctrine, above any other see or pastor whatsoever? Who is so little versed in history, as not to understand the dismal state of religion in the Romish church in those times? Who does not

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know what advantages the bishops of Rome and their servile clergy, made of the ignorance and superstition of those and the succeeding ages; and by what arts and steps they raised themselves to that power which they held in the church for a long while after? when they could tread upon the necks of princes, and make a great king walk bare-foot, and yield himself to be scourged by a company of pesulant monks: when they could send any man upon an errand to visit the holy sepulchre, or the shrine of such a saint; and command five or six kings with great armies upon a needless expedition into the holy land, that so during their absence they might play their own game the better: when they could mint miracles, and impose upon the belief of the people (without the authority of any ancient books) absurd and counterfeit tales of ancient saints and martyrs, as delivered down to them by tradition; and could bring that foppish book the legend, almost into equal authority and veneration with the bible; and persuade the easy people that St. Denys carried his own head in his hand, after it was cut off, two miles, and kiss'd it when he laid it down. Any one that shall but reflect upon the monstrous practices of the Roman bishops and clergy in these ages, the strange feats they play'd, and what absurdities they imposed upon the superstitious credulity of princes and people, may readily imagine not only the possibility, but the easiness of innovating new doctrines as they pleased, under the specious pretences of antiquity, and constant and uninterrupted tradition.

PART
III.

* Apology as
for traditi-
on, p. 49.

§ 8. And this kind of discourse concerning the possibility of errors coming into the church, is not, as Mr. White ridiculously compares it, “ * as if an orator should go about to persuade people, that George, by the help of a long staff, and a nimble cast of his body, and such like advantages, might leap over Paul’s steeple; never considering all the while the disproportion of all these advantages to the height of the steeple: so (saith he) he that discourseth at large how errors use to slid into man’s life, without comparing the power of the causes of error to the strength of resisting, which consists in this principle, nothing is to be admitted but what descends by tradition, &c. says no more towards proving an error’s over-running the church, than the orator for George’s leaping over the steeple.” How vain is this? when it appears from this instance that I have given of the state of the Roman church, in the ninth and tenth centuries, and afterwards, that the causes of error were infinitely stronger than the power of resistance. The great causes of error are ignorance and vice; where ignorance reigns, there’s no power: where vice, no will to resist it. And how great the ignorance and viciousness of all orders of men in the Roman church was, is too apparent from the testimonies I have brought. Where was the strength of resisting error, when for 150 years together the popes were the vilest of men, bishops and priests overwhelmed with ignorance, abandoned to all manner of vice, and most supinely negligent in instructing the people? in such a degenerate state of a church, what strength is there in

in this principle, “ nothing is to be admitted but
“ what descends by tradition ? ” when those, who
ought to teach men what that doctrine is which
was derived to them by tradition, are generally
careless of their duty, and ignorant themselves what
that doctrine is ; when they addict themselves wholly
to the satisfying of their ambition, and other lusts,
and carrying on designs of gain, and getting
dominion over the people ; what can hinder men
so disposed from corrupting the doctrine of CHRIST,
and suiting it to their own lusts and interests ?
and what shall hinder the people from embracing
those corruptions ; when by the negligence of their
pastors to instruct them, and not only so, but also
by their being deprived of the scriptures in a
known tongue, they are become utterly incapable
of knowing what the true doctrine of CHRIST is ?
so that in an age of such profound ignorance and
vice, and general neglect of instruction, ’tis so far
from being impossible for errors to over-run a
church, that the contrary is morally impossible ;
and George’s long staff and advantageous cast of
his body, are more powerful causes to enable him to
leap over Paul’s steeple, than this principle, “ that
“ nothing is to be admitted, but what descends by
“ tradition,” is to keep errors out of a church in
an ignorant and vicious age ; when few or none are
either able or willing to instruct men in the truth.
For suppose this always to have been the principle
of christians, viz. “ that nothing is to be admit-
“ ted as the doctrine of CHRIST, but what is de-
“ scended to them by tradition : ” how shall this
principle secure the church from heresy, any more

PART than this, viz. "that nothing but truth is to be
 III. "assented to," doth secure men from error? or
 more than this, viz. "that no man is to do any thing
 "but what is wise and virtuous," does secure the
 generality of mankind from folly and vice?

S E C T. VIII.

The se-
 cond an-
 swer to his
 second
 demon-
 stration.

§ 1. S Econdly, the principles upon which this de-
 monstration relies, are not sufficiently proved
 by him.

His first principle is this, "that age, which holds
 "her faith delivered thus from the apostles, nei-
 "ther can it self have changed any thing in it, nor
 "know or doubt that any age since the apostles
 "had changed or innovated any thing therein.
 "This proposition (he tells us) needs no proof
 "to evidence it, but only an explication: for
 "since no man can hold contrary to his know-
 "ledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change or
 "innovate in the case proposed, without knowing
 "he did so; 'tis a manifest impossibility a whole
 "age should fall into an absurdity so inconsistent
 "with the nature of one single man." But (by his
 favour) that which he says is no proof, but only
 an explication, is a proof if it be any thing; and
 the force of it is this: "that which is inconsistent
 "with the nature of one single man, is manifestly
 "impossible to a whole age; but it is inconsistent
 "with the nature of any single man to hold con-
 "trary to his knowledge, &c. therefore impossible
 "to a whole age; and consequently, that age which
 "holds her faith delivered thus from the apostles,
 "neither

“neither can it self have changed any thing, SECT.
 “nor, &c.” so that in order to the making good ^{VIII.}
 of this first principle, Mr. S. hath left nothing
 unproved but only this proposition, namely, that it
 is impossible that any one single man that holds
 his faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly
 from the apostles, should either himself have chang-
 ed any thing in it, or know or doubt that any
 age since the apostles hath changed or innovated
 any thing therein: and to make out the truth of
 this proposition, there only remains this to be
 proved, viz. that it is impossible for any single man
 to be mistaken: for if that be possible, then con-
 trary to Mr. S. a man may hold that to have been
 delivered as a doctrine of faith from the apostles
 which was not so delivered.

§ 2. His second principle is this, “that no age
 “could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that
 “very thing to posterity as received from CHRIST
 “by continual succession.” He proves it thus;
 “since man is a rational creature, he must have
 “some reason or motive good or bad, which he
 “proposeth to himself as an end to be atchieved
 “by his action: and whatever his remote end is,
 “his immediate end, in telling posterity a late
 “invented thing was held immediately before, is
 “to make them believe it. Wherefore since a seen
 “impossibility cannot be a motive to one not
 “frantick: and since ’tis evidently impossible they
 “should make posterity believe a thing so univer-
 “sally known to be false, as this must needs
 “be, &c. it is as impossible this principle should
 “falter, as that the foregoing age should conspire
 “to

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“ to act without a motive, or that the succeeding
“ age should believe what they know to be other-
“ wise, that is, should hold both sides of a contra-
“ diction in a clear matter of fact.” The force
of which is this, that it is impossible that any man
not frantick should attempt to innovate in matter
of christian doctrine, because the immediate end of
such an attempt must be to have his new doctrine
believed; but it is impossible he should attain this
end, and impossible he should not see that it is
impossible to attain it: now a seen impossibility is
an end that cannot move any one that is not fran-
tick; therefore no man that is not frantick, can
attempt to innovate in matter of christian doc-
trine. Thus he hath demonstrated it impossible
that there should be any hereticks, if a heretick
be one that attempts to innovate in matter of chri-
stian doctrine: for if there be any such attempt-
ters they must be frantick, and if they be fran-
tick they can be no hereticks; for heresy im-
plies a crime, but God will not impute the acti-
ons of mad men to them as faults. Again, suppose
he that attempts to innovate be mistaken (and I
hope Mr. S. will grant that a heretick is fallible)
and think that which he delivers as CHRIST’s doc-
trine to be really so, though indeed it be not; why
should such a person think it impossible to make
men believe that to be received from CHRIST
which he really thinks was received, and thinks he
can make it appear that it was so? and if this be
granted, then it is not impossible that man, though
he be a rational creature, may attempt to innovate.
And if so, then his second principle is not proved.

If

If Mr. S. had any regard to the noble science of SECT. IX.
controversy (whereof he pretends to be so great a master) he would not bring such trifling sophisms instead of demonstrative proofs : and nothing less than a demonstrative proof will serve to establish any principle upon which a demonstration is to be built.

S E C T. IX.

§ 1. **D**Octrines and practices which must be acknowledged to have been innovated, The third answer to Mr. S's second demonstration.
have made the same pretence to uninterrupted tradition. And of this I shall give several instances ; one among the jews, the rest among christians.

1. I shall instance among the traditionary jews, whose persuasion in our SAVIOUR's time was, and still is, that their oral doctrine, which they call their cabala, hath descended to them from Moses uninterruptedly. Now here is the existence of such a persuasion, as Mr. S. affirms to be " impossible without " tradition's ever-indeficiency to beget it. And this persuasion of theirs is most exactly parallel with the pretensions of the Romish church according to Mr. S. For here's a multitude of traditionary jews, manifoldly greater in proportion to the dissenters in that church, than the Romish church is in comparison to those christians that dissent from her. Josephus tells us *, " that " the richer sort were of the persuasion of the sad-
" ducees, but the multitude were on the pharisees " side." So that the pharisees had this mark of the true church (as Bellarmine calls it) common to them with the church of Rome, that they were the greatest number, and so they continue to this very day ; inasmuch that although they do not call themselves the catho-
licks,

* Antiq. Jud. l. 13. c. 18.

PART. licks, yet I am sure they call all jews that do dissent
 III. from them schismaticks. Now that the sadducees
 were for the written law against oral tradition, -is, I
 confess, no credit to us; but that our SAVIOUR re-
 proved the traditionary doctrines and practices of the
 pharisees, because by them they made void the writ-
 ten law, is much more to the discredit of the asser-
 tors of oral tradition. Both romanists and pharisees
 own alike a written doctrine, but then they both pre-
 tend the true sense and explication thereof to have de-
 scended to them by oral tradition. For just as the
 traditionary christians do now, so Josephus tells * us
 the traditionary jews of old, the pharisees, did pre-
 tend by their oral tradition to interpret the law more
 accurately and exactly than any other sect. In like
 manner he † tells us, “ that all things, that belonged
 “ to prayer and divine worship, were regulated and
 “ administred according to their interpretations of
 “ the law.” And they both agree in this, to make
 void the word of GOD by their tradition; which the
 pharisees did no otherwise than Mr. S. does, by equal-
 ling oral tradition to scripture; nay preferring it above
 scripture, in making it the sole rule of faith, and in-
 terpreting the scripture according to it. Hence are
 those common sayings in the talmud, and other jewish
 books: “ do not think that the written law is the
 “ foundation, but that the law orally delivered is the
 “ right foundation;” which is to say with Mr. S.
 “ that not the scripture, but oral tradition is the
 “ true rule of faith.” Again, “ there is more in
 “ the words of the scribes (viz. the testifiers of tra-
 “ dition) than in the words of the written law.”
 Again, “ the oral law excels the written, as much as
 “ the

* Ibid. 1.
 17. c. 3.
 & de bell.
 Jud. 1. 1.
 c. 4. & 1.
 2. c. 12.
 * Antiq.
 1. 18.

“ the soul doth the body ;” which accords very well with what Mr. S. frequently tells us, that the scripture without tradition is but a dead letter, destitute of life and sense. Hence also it is that they required the people (as the traditionary church does now) to yield up themselves to the dictates of tradition even in the most absurd things, as appears by that common saying among them, “ if the scribes say that the right hand is the left, and the left the right (that bread is flesh, and wine is blood) hearken to them,” that is, make no scruple of whatsoever they deliver as tradition, though never so contrary to reason or sense. And lastly, the doctrines of the pharisees were many of them practical ; such were all those which concerned external rites and observances, as washing of hands and cups, &c. so that these pharisaical traditions had also that unspeakable advantage which Mr. S. says renders their traditions unmitakeable, “ that they were daily practised, and came down clad in such plain matters of fact, that the most stupid man living could not possibly be ignorant of them.” Therefore, according to Mr. S’s principles, it was impossible that any age of the jews should be persuaded that these things were commanded by Moses, and ever since observed, if they had not been so : and yet our SAVIOUR denies these customs to have been of any such authority as they pretended.

§ 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to shew the agreement which is between the traditionary jews and papists, their own writers so liberally acknowledging it. Mr. White * indeed says, “ that
* De fid. & theol. tract. 1.
“ the faith of the jews was not delivered to them

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“ orally, but by writing ;” than which nothing can be more inconsistent with his hypothesis. For if the jewish faith was conveyed to them not orally but by writing, then either the jewish church had no sufficient rule of faith, or else a writing may be such a rule. But other of their champions make great use of the parallel, between the traditionary jews and the romish church, to confirm from thence their own traditionary doctrines. Cardinal Perron hath a full pas-

* Rep. to
K. James,
observ. 3.
c. 4.

sage to this purpose : “ as this (says he *) is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the majesty of the ancient mosaick scripture, to believe and observe not only all the things which are therein actually contained, but also those things which are therein contained mediately and relatively, as the doctrines of paradise, &c. which were not contained therein but mediately, and by the authority which it gave to the deposition of the patriarchal and mosaick tradition, preserved by heart, and in the oral doctrine of the synagogue : so this is to preserve a sound and entire respect to the majesty of the apostolical scripture, to believe and observe all the things which it contains, not only immediately and by itself, but mediately and by reference to the apostolical traditions, to which in gross and generally it gives the authority of apostolical doctrines, and to the church the authority of guardian and depositary to preserve and attest them.” Voysin, in his observations upon Raymundus Martin, * tells us, “ that as in the old law the great consistory at Jerusalem was the foundation of the true tradition, so (says he) the see of Rome is the foundation of our tradition. And as the continual succession of the high
“ priests

* Pugio
fid. p. 145.

“ priests and fathers among the jews was the great
 “ confirmation of the truth of their traditions, so
 “ (says he) with us the truth of our catholick doc-
 “ trine is confirmed by a continual succession of
 “ popes.”

SECT.
IX.

§ 3. From all this it appears, that the pharisees among the jews made the same pretence to oral tradition which the papists do at this day according to Mr. S. And if so, then Mr. S's demonstration *à posteriori* is every whit as strong for the jews against our SAVIOUR, as it is for the papists against the protestants. For we find that in our SAVIOUR's time, it was then the present persuasion of the traditi-
 onary jews, that their faith, and their rites, and the true sense and interpretation of their written law was descended from Moses and the prophets to them un-
 interruptedly ; which we find was most firmly rooted in their hearts. But the jews had constant tradition among them, that the MESSIAH was to be a great temporal prince : and though the letters of the prophe-
 cies concerning him, might well enough have been accommodated to the low and suffering condition of our SAVIOUR ; yet they did infallibly know that their MESSIAH was to be another kind of person, from sense written in their hearts, from the interpre-
 tation of those prophecies orally brought down to them from the patriarchal and mosaick tradition pre-
 served by heart, and in the oral doctrine of the syna-
 gogue, and from the living voice of their church es-
 sential, that is, the universal consent of the then tra-
 ditionary jews. If it be said, that the jewish tradi-
 tion did indeed bring down several doctrines not con-
 tained in scripture, of paradise, of hell, of the last
 judgment,

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* P 76.

judgment, of the resurrection, &c. (as cardinal Per-
ron affirms) but it did not bring down this point of
the MESSIAH's being a temporal prince: then as Mr.
S. * asks us, so the jew does him; "by what virtue
" tradition brought down those other points? and
" whether the same virtue were not powerful to bring
" down this as well as those?" Then he will ask
him farther, "is there not a necessary connexion and
" relation between a constant cause and its formal ef-
" fect? so that if its formal effect be points received
" as delivered ever, the proper cause must be an ever-
" delivery; whence he will argue from such an ef-
" fect to its cause for any particular point, and con-
" sequently for this point that is in controversy be-
" tween jews and christians, concerning the Mes-
" siah's being a temporal prince, in case it be a
" point held ever delivered;" but most certain it is,
it was so held by the jews in our SAVIOUR's time,
and hath been held so ever since to this day.

I shall not trouble the reader with transcribing the
rest of this demonstration, only desire him as he reads
it over, to imagine instead of Mr. S. a pharisee de-
monstrating against one of CHRIST's disciples, the
infallibility of the oral tradition of the jews: and I
doubt not but he will find this demonstration, and
every part of it (changing only the names) as for-
cibly concluding CHRIST not to be the MESSIAH, as
it doth infer any point of popery against the prote-
stants.

* Apol.
123, &c.

§ 4. Before I leave this instance of the jewish tra-
dition, I shall briefly consider what Mr. White* hath
offered by way of answer to it; as first, "that the
" matter of these traditions is nothing else but expli-
" cations

“ cations of scripture framed and invented by their
 “ own rabbins,” So we say, that the popish traditions
 are innovations. But then Mr. White and Mr. S.
 tell us, that they can demonstrate them to be de-
 scended from CHRIST and his apostles, because it is
 the present persuasion of a multitude of christians that
 they are so descended. In like manner, if this de-
 monstration be good, the jews can prove their tradi-
 tions to be descended from Moses and the prophets.
 Secondly, he says, “ that the form of these traditions
 “ is more ridiculous than the canting of gypsies, or
 “ the juggling of hocus-pocus, because it consists in
 “ inventing the sense of the scripture from the myste-
 “ ries, and numbers, and changes of letters.” This is
 a gross inexcusable mistake. For though the jews
 have such a cabala (call’d Gematry) as this which
 Mr. White describes; yet that cabala which is
 argued in this instance, and which our SAVIOUR
 reproves in the Pharisees by the name of tradition,
 is quite another thing, and among the jewish writers
 known by the name of the unwritten or oral law;
 which they say was delivered to Moses on mount
 Sinai, and by him conveyed to Aaron and Joshua,
 and the elders, and successively delivered down
 from one age to another; and at last by Rabbi Je-
 hudah compiled into one volume which they call
 mishna, or δευτέρωσις. And this does not consist
 in the art of numbring, combining, or changing of
 letters, as Mr. White imagines. But suppose it did
 so, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to
 be; the instance would be so much the more con-
 clusive against them, if what they affirm be true,
 “ that oral tradition is infallible, and that the per-
 “ suasion

PART " suasion of a traditionary church in any age, that
III. " such a doctrine descended to them from CHRIST
 " or Moses, be a demonstration that it did so:" for
 if this be sufficient evidence it is nothing to the pur-
 pose what the doctrine be either for matter or form:
 for if it be once demonstrated to have come from
 CHRIST or Moses, it is without any farther dis-
 pute to be received as of divine authority. So that
 Mr. White quite alters the state of the question;
 which was not whether the jewish cabala be absurd
 and ridiculous, but whether the general persuasion of
 the jews in any age, that it descended to them by
 uninterrupted tradition from Moses, be a demon-
 stration that it did so. If it be, then the jewish
 cabala is as demonstratively of divine authority as
 the oral doctrine of the papists. Thirdly, he says,
 " this cabala was a doctrine delivered to few, and
 " that with strict charge to keep it from publicity,
 " and so communicate it again successively to a fe-
 " lect committee of a few; wherein (says he) you
 " may see as fair an opportunity for juggling and
 " cozenage, as in our case there is an impossibility."
 This I think is true of the cabala, which (it seems)
 Mr. White had only in his view, but is a horrible
 mistake if he speaks of the oral law which was con-
 tained in the mishna, and which this instance only
 intends. For of this Maimonides * says expressly,
 " that in every age, from the time of Moses to
 " Rabbi Jehudah, who compiled the mishna, the
 " oral law was publicly taught: and that after
 " Rabbi Jehudah had compiled it into one volume,
 " the Israelites did generally write out copies of it,
 " and it was every where carefully taught, for fear
 " left

* In præ-
 fat. sum.
 talmud.

“left the oral law should by forgetfulness be lost among the jews.” So that upon account of the publickness of the doctrine, there is as great an impossibility of juggling and cozenage in the case of the jewish as of the romish tradition. Besides, was washing of hands and cups, which they also pretended to have come down to them from Moses, and to have been constantly practised in every age, a secret thing? was it not a practical tradition, and performed in a sensible matter? If therefore no age can conspire to impose upon the next in a plain custom; and if an universal tradition of such a thing cannot come in without such a conspiracy: how could this be the persuasion of any age, that washing of hands, &c. was prescribed by Moses and practised in all ages, if it had not truly been so?

§ 5. Secondly, as for instances among christians, whereof many remain yet upon record; as namely, the various and opposite traditions about the time of easter, and concerning the baptism of hereticks; and the apostolical tradition (as St. Austin calls it) concerning the admission of infants to the communion; all which have been frequently urged in this controversy, and none of them yet sufficiently answered; I shall, to avoid tediousness, passing by these, insist only upon that of the chiliafts; which in Justin Martyr’s time, was the persuasion of all orthodox christians, that is (in Mr. S’s dialect) of all the holders to tradition. For if notwithstanding the persuasion of that age, that this doctrine was descended to them from the apostles, it was not really so descended; then the persuasion of christians
in

PART in any age, that a doctrine was brought down to them from the apostles, is no demonstration that it was so.

III.
* Apol.
p. 78, 79,
&c.

§ 6. To this instance Mr. White answers * by telling us, “ that Eusebius says that this tradition “ sprang from Papias” (a good but a credulous and simple man) who it seems was mistaken in saying that it was the apostles doctrine. But for all this Justin Martyr says it was received by all orthodox christians in his time, as a doctrine descended to them from the apostles. And if Justin said true, nothing can make more against their demonstration of the infallibility of tradition, than the natural consequence from these two sayings of Eusebius and Justin, which is this, “ that the mistake of one simple “ and credulous man may in an age or two give “ occasion to the universal entertainment of a doctrine, as descended down to them from CHRIST “ and his apostles, when there was no such matter.” Hath not Mr. White now done his rule of faith great service by this answer? But it is according to his manner in all his writings, to say any thing to remove a present objection, though never so much to the prejudice of his main hypothesis; than which I do not know any quality in a writer which doth more certainly betray the want either of judgment, or of sincerity, or of a good cause.

* Apol.
p. 81.

§ 7. And whereas he says, “ * that Irenæus his “ testimony proves it to be no tradition; for he sets “ down the supposed words of our SAVIOUR, which “ plainly shews it is a story, not a tradition; a “ tradition being a sense delivered, not in set words, “ but settled in the auditors hearts by hundreds “ of

“ of different expressions explicating the same meaning.” When I consider this passage of Mr. White, I confess I cannot compliment him, and say (as he makes his nephew do in the dialogue * between * them) “ I cannot but applaud your discourse, it hath so pleasing and attractive a countenance.” And again, “ † I am not able to oppose what you say by any weighty objection, your arguments being not only strong and nervous, but of so comely and winning a complexion, &c.” I cannot (I say) speak all this of his present argument ; but I may deservedly apply to it the last part of his nephew’s compliment, that it is an argument so framed, “ as if, without any evidence of its consequence, it would persuade men to believe it.” But to return an answer to this passage: it seems (according to Mr. White) that Irenæus was mistaken in the very nature of tradition: and if so learned a father was ignorant in the common rule of faith, “ what can we (to use Mr. S’s words *) under- * P. 39. takingly promise to weaker heads?” Mr. S. instanceth in the creed and ten commandments as the principal traditions which parents teach their children ; but now Mr. White can shew plainly, “ that these are no traditions but stories, because tradition is a sense delivered not in set words, &c.” As if CHRIST and his apostles could deliver no doctrine unless they expressed the same thing an hundred several ways. But suppose they did so (which no man hath any reason to imagine, because a thing may be expressed as plainly by one way as by an hundred) can no man deliver this tradition who speaks it in any one of those expressions? If

* Rush.
worth
dial. 4.
sect. 4.
† Ibid.
sect. 5.

PART one should employ his servant to carry a message,
III. and (because Mr. White thinks this necessary) should settle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the same thing in an hundred several expressions; and the servant should go and deliver this message in one of those very expressions that his master used to him, and should say these were his master's very words; would not this be well enough?

No; if he had come to such a philosopher as Mr. White, he would soon have given him to understand that he was not fit to bring a message, or to be credited in it, who had so little wit as not to know that a message is a thing not to be delivered in set words. And now I would intreat Mr. White to reconcile himself in this matter to

** Dialog. 1. sect. 6.* his friends. Mr. Rushworth says, “* ’Tis impossible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the same sense in divers words:” which, if it be true, I would fain know what certain course Mr. White can prescribe to explicate the same meaning by hundreds of different expressions, and consequently how tradition can be infallibly conveyed, by settling the sense of it in the auditors hearts by

** Exomolog. c. 10. sect. 4.* such variety of expressions. Mr. Cressy * likewise (a zealous assertor of tradition) does affirm, “that the primitive churches were even to excess scrupulous in maintaining the very phrases of traditional doctrines; which (according to Mr. White) plainly shews these doctrines to be stories, not traditions, because tradition is a sense delivered not in set words.” The same author complains,

** Ibid. c. 19. sect. 2.* “* that few among their learnedest masters of

con.

“ controversy, propose the points to be disputed be-
 “ tween them and the protestants in the language
 “ of the church.” By which, I suppose, he does
 not mean, that these controvertists were to blame
 in that they did not settle the sense of these points
 by hundreds of different expressions explicating the
 same meaning, but that they did not keep to the
 words wherein the church had in councils, or other-
 wise (if there be any other way) declared her sense
 of those points. Again * he says, “ that St. Paul,” *Ibid. c.*
 “ referring to the doctrine settled by oral instruc- *27. sect. 2.*
 “ tion, to shew the uniformity of it every where,
 “ calls it a form of wholsom words.” From whence
 we may conclude either that St. Paul did not well
 to call the traditionary doctrine (as Mr. Cressy says
 he does) a form of words, or else (which is more
 probable) that Mr. White is mistaken in saying,
 “ that a tradition is a sense not delivered in set
 “ words.” Furthermore, the same * Mr. Cressy * *Ibid. c.*
 tells us, “ that St. Augustine was careful not only *28. sect. 1.*
 “ to deliver traditional truths themselves, but the
 “ terms also in which those truths were conveyed
 “ to his times.” But now Mr. White could have
 informed St. Augustine, that this officious care of
 his was not only superfluous but pernicious to tra-
 dition.

§ 8. But to return to Justin’s testimony; to
 which the sum of Mr. White’s answer, is, “ that
 “ Justin esteem’d it not as a point necessary
 “ to salvation, but rather a piece of learning
 “ higher than the common; since he both acknow-
 “ ledges other catholicks held the contrary, and
 “ entitles those of his persuasion, *κατὰ πάντα ὁρθε-*
γνώμονες,

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“ *γνημονες*, right in all opinions, that is, wholly
 “ of his own mind.” It is not material to my
 purpose, whether or no Justin look’d upon this as
 a point necessary to salvation, so long as it is evi-
 dent that he looked upon it as a divine revelation,
 and part of the christian doctrine. And yet, it
 seems, he thought it a point of more than ordinary
 importance, because he joins it with the doctrine of
 the resurrection, and says that it was not disowned
 by any but those who also denied the resurrection.
 But whereas Mr. White says, “ that Justin acknow-
 “ ledges other catholicks to have held the contra-
 “ ry ;” I hope to make it evident from the scope
 and series of his discourse, that he acknowledges no
 such thing; but that the plain design of his dis-
 course, is to shew that this doctrine was owned by
 all true christians. For when Trypho asks him *,
 whether the christians did indeed believe that Jeru-
 salem should be rebuilt, &c. he returns him this
 answer, “ I am not such a wretch as to speak other-
 “ wise than I think. I have told thee before, that
 “ my self and many others (as ye all know) are
 “ of the mind that this will come to pass. But,
 “ that many indeed of those christians who are
 “ [not] of the pure and pious persuasion, do not
 “ own this, I have intimated to thee.” That the
 negative particle (though omitted in the copy) ought
 to be thus inserted, will be clear to any one that
 considers what follows: for after he had spoken of
 those who disown this doctrine, he immediately
 adds, by way of farther description of them, that
 though they are called christians, yet in truth they
 are not christians, in these words: “ for of these
 (viz,

* Dial.
 cum
 Tryph.
 p. 306.
 Edit. Lu-
 tet. 1615.

“ (viz. the disowners of this doctrine) who are
 “ called indeed christians, but are atheistical and
 “ impious hereticks, I have shewed thee that they
 “ teach in all points blasphemous, atheistical and
 “ absurd things. But that ye may know that I do
 “ not say this for you only, I will, according to
 “ my ability, compile all these discourses which
 “ have past between us into one piece; in which I
 “ will by writing make profession of this very thing
 “ which I now declare to you. For I do not
 “ choose to follow men or the doctrines of men,
 “ but God and such doctrines as are from him. And
 “ though ye may have conversed with some who
 “ are called christians, and yet do not acknowledge
 “ this; but even dare to blaspheme the God of
 “ Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God
 “ of Jacob; who also say that there is no resur-
 “ rection of the dead, but that so soon as they die
 “ their souls are received into heaven: do not
 “ count these men christians; no more than a man,
 “ that considers things rightly, would own the
 “ sadducees, and such like sects, to be jews, &c.
 “ but I my self, and as many christians as are
 “ thoroughly of the right persuasion, do both know
 “ that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, and
 “ a thousand years in Jerusalem, which shall be
 “ built, adorned and enlarged, &c.” Can any
 thing be plainer than that Justin endeavours by this
 discourse to satisfy Trypho, that this point they
 were speaking of was a divine doctrine, and owned
 to be so by all christians; except such as did only
 bear the name and title of christians, but were in-
 deed blasphemous hereticks and deniers of the resur-
 rection?

PART
III.* Nov.
edit. p.
664.

rection? by which character, that he intends to describe the impious sects of the gnosticks will appear by and by. So that Mr. White must either allow the inserting of the negative particle (which Mr. Mede * proves to have been omitted in the copy) or else acknowledge that those who are christians only in name, but in truth are impious blasphemous and absurd hereticks, may properly be said to be of the pure and pious opinion of the christians. And if only these be the other catholicks, whom Mr. White says Justin acknowledges to have held contrary to the millenaries, I am contented he should make his best of them. If Mr. White should blame the inserting of the negative particle [not] into Justin's text, as too great a boldness with the fathers; it were easily answered, that the sense evidently requires it: and in such a case it is no boldness, but such a liberty as the most learned of their own interpreters and commentators upon the fathers do frequently take. And as for Mr. S. if he takes offence at this, one may with reason (since the exigency of the sense plainly requires the inserting of it) demand of him (what he * unreasonably does of us in relation to all the affirmative propositions of scripture) to demonstrate that the particle [not] was not left out of this clause of Justin by those who transcribed the book. But besides the exigency of the sense in this place, that the negative ought to have been inserted, will appear by the reference which Justin makes in this passage to something foregoing in the same dialogue. "I have (says he) declared to thee before, that my self and many others are of the mind that this will come to

" pass.

* P. 31.

“ pass. But, that many indeed of those christians,
“ who are [not] of the pure and pious persuasion
“ do not own this, I have intimated to thee. For
“ of these, who are called indeed christians but are
“ atheistical and impious hereticks, I have shewed
“ thee that they teach in all points blasphemous,
“ atheistical, and absurd things.” In these words
he plainly refers to some precedent passage, which
if it can be found will be a certain key to open to
us the sense of this place. I know that Mr. Mede
* (perhaps not observing it) thought that passage
to have been fraudulently expunged by the enemies
of the millenary opinion: but it seems to me to be
still extant; for I find towards the beginning of
this dialogue, after that Justin had endeavoured to
prove at large out of scripture this glorious coming
of CHRIST, and to refute those who applied the
texts produced by him to that purpose to Heze-
kiah, and to Solomon, whose falling off to idola-
try he occasionally mentions; whereupon Trypho
objects to him, that many who were called christians,
did also communicate in the idol-feasts: to this, I
say, I find Justin returning this answer: * first, * P. 253,
he denies not, “ * that there are such as these who
“ own themselves christians, and confess the cruci-
“ fied JESUS to be both LORD and CHRIST, and
“ yet teach not his doctrines, but the doctrine of
“ seducing spirits.” But, says he, “ we who are
“ the disciples of the true and pure doctrine of
“ JESUS CHRIST, are from this very thing the
“ more strengthened in our faith, and become
“ more confirmed in the hope which by him hath
“ been declared to us. For now we see those
“ things

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“ things visibly and effectually accomplish’d which
 “ he before-hand told us would be done in his
 “ name. For he said, many shall come in my
 “ name, &c.” By which hope any one that reads
 the antecedents and consequents, will plainly see that
 Justin means the hope of the millennium (which he
 had been speaking of before) and consequently of the
 resurrection, which he looked upon as having a strict
 connexion with the doctrine of the millennium, be-
 cause (as he tells us afterwards) this doctrine was denied
 by none but such as also denied the resurrection. And of
 these men his description runs on in these words, πολ-
 λοι, &c. “ Many (saith he) both are and have been,
 “ that have come in the name of JESUS, and taught
 “ both to speak and do atheistical and blasphemous
 “ things; and are by us denominated from those men
 “ from whom each of their doctrines and opinions had
 “ its rise (namely as it follows, marcionites, valentinians,
 “ &c.) and all these in their several ways teach men to
 “ blaspheme the creator of the universe, and the
 “ CHRIST, whose coming was foretold by him, and
 “ the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But we
 “ have no communion with them, as knowing them
 “ to be atheistical and impious, &c.” This passage
 in hand, when I compare it with the text before quo-
 ted and consider the words and characters of them
 both, I cannot but believe it the very same that he
 refers to in these words, “ I have declared to thee, I
 “ have intimated to thee, &c.” If so, the matter in
 controversy is clear, that the doctrine of the mille-
 nium was universal: if it be not the same, I could
 wish to be shewed some other place in this dialogue
 where Justin makes any such declaration or intima-
 tion.

tion. In the mean while, by comparison of these places, it is evident there are but two sorts of men that Justin speaks of. First, "who believe the millenium? we the disciples * of the true and pure doctrine, &c. viz. myself and many others;" again, "myself and as many christians as are thoroughly † of the right persuasion." Secondly, "who deny the millenium? many christians, saith Justin: but what christians? of a right persuasion? that, saith he, I have signified before, *τὸς γὰρ*, &c. for I have shewed thee of them who are called christians, but are indeed atheists and impious hereticks, that they teach blasphemous and atheistical, and absurd things;" and true it is, he did shew before, "that those who denied the millenium were many in number, and were called christians, &c. but were teachers of blasphemous and atheistical things, &c. and known to be atheists and impious, &c." But he shewed it of none other besides these: so that if this doctrine were likewise denied by many christians of the pure and pious persuasion, then Justin Martyr had foully forgot himself; but if not, then it is plain that the transcribers have wronged Justin, by leaving out a negative which ought to have been inserted. It is worth observing by the way how Mr. White pleases himself with false and frivolous criticisms upon the words *πολλοὺς* and *ὁρθογνώμονες*. False they are, as Mr. White shall know if he desires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are render'd by my preceding discourse; for which reason I say no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter (as Mr. S. * warily suggests) not to engage himself, nor * P. 68; be hook'd by others, out of his own infallible way,

PART. but leave it wholly to the * bird-witted hereticks (as
 III. Mr. S. calls them) to perch upon the specifical natures
 • P. 69. of words, as he does of things.

§ 9. Besides these instances I have given of doctrines and practices, which Mr. S. cannot deny to have been innovated, I might instance likewise in the chief points of popery, and shew, that for all their pretence to tradition, they are really innovations. But because this would engage me in tedious disputes about particular points, I will only single out one of their most fundamental doctrines, viz. that of transubstantiation; concerning which I shall shew that, notwithstanding it is the universal persuasion of the present Roman church, yet they have not, nor can have any assurance that it was the doctrine of CHRIST, and that it is descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition. I shall not at all contend against the word transubstantiation (which is generally acknowledged to be new) but only the thing signified by it, a substantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of CHRIST. And this I might shew at large not to have been the doctrine of the ancient Fathers. But because Mr. White and Dr. Holden, and Mr. Cressy do so frequently and confidently tell us, that nothing is to be reputed a traditional doctrine, the contrary whereof hath been publicly held by any catholick who continued afterwards uncensured, and in the communion of the church: therefore I shall content myself at present with one clear testimony, and that of a very eminent person in the church, St. Theodoret, concerning whom pope Leo (in an epistle to him, at the end of Theodoret's works) gives this testimony, " that in
 the

“ the judgment of the apostolick see he was free^{SECT. IX.}
 “ from all stain of heresy.” The passage I intend is
 in his dialogues, between a catholick under the name
 of Orthodoxus, and Eranistes, who sustained the per-
 son of an heretick. Eranistes * maintaining that the^{Dialog.}
 body of CHRIST was changed into the substance of^{2.}
 the divinity, he illustrates it by this similitude. “ As
 “ (says he) the symbols of the LORD’s body and
 “ blood are one thing before the invocation of the
 “ priest; but after the invocation, are changed and do
 “ become another thing: so the body of our LORD,
 “ after his ascension, is changed into the divine sub-
 “ stance.” To which Orthodoxus returns this an-
 swer, “ thou art caught in thine own net. Because
 “ the mystical symbols after consecration do not pass
 “ out of their own nature; for they remain in their
 “ former substance, figure and appearance, and may
 “ be seen and handled even as before.” He does not
 only in express words deny the substance of the sym-
 bols to be changed, but the occasion upon which
 these words are brought in, and the scope of them (if
 they be of any force against the heretick’s illustration)
 renders them incapable of any other sense. When Mr.
 S. hath answered this testimony, I have more for him.

That which I mainly urge against this doctrine is,
 the monstrous absurdities and contradictions contain’d
 in it, together with the necessary consequence of
 them. Several of the absurdities of it are well
 brought together by Scotus *, who tells us, that to^{Distinct.}
 prove the possibility of CHRIST’s body being con-^{l. 4. dist.}
 tained under the species of bread and wine, many^{10. qu. 1}
 things must be proved which seem to involve a con-
 tradiction, as, 1. “ That one quantum (or extended
 7 L 2 “ body)

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“ body) may be together in the very same place
 “ with another. 2. That a less quantum may be to-
 “ gether in the same place with a greater ;” i. e. a
 body of less extension may occupy not only the same,
 but as much room as a body of greater extension
 does; which is to say no more but this, that a body
 less than another may be as great as that other even
 whilst it is less than it. 3. “ That a greater quan-
 “ tum may be together with every part of a less
 “ quantum,” i. e. a body that is greater than ano-
 ther, may be as little as the least part of that other
 body which is less than it. 4. “ That a subject may be
 “ without quantity,” i. e. there may be a body
 which hath no kind of magnitude. 5. That a body
 may be somewhere where it was not before, without
 changing its place, i. e. a body may be removed to
 another place, whilst it remains still in the same
 place. 6. “ That a quantum may be without any
 “ quantitative mode, i. e. a body may be extended
 without any manner of extension. “ The possibi-
 “ lity of all which, he saith (and I am very much of
 “ his mind) it would be too tedious a work to
 “ prove ;” and therefore he only attempts to prove
 the two last, which (in all reason) is work enough for
 one man. All these seeming contradictions (as he
 modestly calls them) are by his own acknowledg-
 ment involved in this doctrine. To these I might add
 many more, as how a thing can be said to be changed
 into another thing which did exist before : how a bo-
 dy can be present in a place after the manner of a
 spirit : and yet this they affirm concerning the pre-
 sence of CHRIST’s body in the sacrament : one might
 as well say that snow is black, but not after the manner

of

of blackness, but in the way of whiteness, which is to ^{SECT. IX.} talk nonsense after the manner of sense: How the whole body of CHRIST can be contained under the least sensible part of the species of bread, as is generally affirmed: nay, and Scotus * adds, that the whole body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he says expressly, "that the head and the foot of the body of CHRIST are as far distant from one another in the sacrament, as they are in heaven;" as if one should say that a body, all whose parts lie within the compass of a small pin's-head, may yet within that little compass have parts two yards distant from one another: and lastly, "how the sensible species of bread, e. g. quantity, whiteness, softness, &c. can exist without any subject:" to affirm the possibility of which (as generally they do) is to say that there may be quantities of white and soft nothings; for this is the plain english of that assertion, "that sensible species may exist without a subject;" which being stript of those terms of art (species and subject) that do a little disguise it, it appears to be plain nonsense.

Now the proper and necessary consequence of this doctrine is to take away all certainty, and especially the certainty of sense: for if that which my sight and taste and touch do all assure me to be a little piece of wafer, may notwithstanding this be flesh and blood, even the whole body of a man; then notwithstanding the greatest assurance that sense can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what sense reported it to be. If so, then farewell the infallibility of tradition, which depends upon the certainty of sense: and which is

PART is a worse consequence, if this doctrine be admitted,
 III. we can have no sufficient assurance that the christian doctrine is a divine revelation. For the assurance of that depending upon the assurance we have of the miracles said to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the assurance we can have of a miracle depending upon the certainty of our senses; it is very plain that that doctrine which takes away the certainty of sense, does in so doing overthrow the certainty of christian religion. And what can be more vain than to pretend, that a man may be assured that such a doctrine is revealed by God, and consequently true, which if it be true, a man can have no assurance at all of any divine revelation? surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder that any man who considers the natural consequences of this doctrine can be a papist; unless he have attained to Mr. Cressy's pitch of learning, who speaking of the difficult arguments wherewith
 * Exomol. this doctrine was pressed, says * plainly, " I must
 c. 73. sect. " answer freely and ingenuously, that I have not
 7. " learned to answer such arguments, but to despise
 " them." And if this be a good way, whenever we have a mind to believe any thing, to scorn those objections against it which we cannot solve; then christian religion hath no advantage above the vilest enthusiasms; and a turk may maintain Mahomet and his alcoran (in opposition to CHRIST and his doctrine) against all that Grotius, or any other hath said, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely say, " I have not learned to answer
 " such arguments, but to despise them."

§ 10. I will add one instance more in another kind, to shew the uncertainty of oral and practical traditions, and that shall be the tradition concerning pope Joan; than which scarce any thing was ever more generally received in the historical kind. Many and great authors affirm it, as testifiers of the general fame. None ever denied it till the reformers had made use of it to the disadvantage of popery. Since that time not only papists deny it, but several of our own writers cease to believe it. Phil. Bergomensis tells the story thus: "Anno 858. John the 7th pope, &c. The tradition is, "that this person was a woman, &c." Here's an oral tradition. He concludes thus: "in detestation of whose filthiness, and to perpetuate the memory of her name, the popes even to this day going on procession with the people and clergy, when they come to the place of her travail, &c. in token of abomination they turn from it, and go a by-way; and being past that detestable place, they return into the way, and finish their procession." Here is one practical tradition. "And for avoiding the like miscarriages, it was decreed that no one should thereafter be admitted into St. Peter's chair, *præusquam per foratam sedem futuri Pontificis genitalia ab ultimo diacono cardinale attrectarentur*:" here is another with a witness. * Sabellicus relates the same; and moreover says, "that this porphyry chair was in his time to be seen in the pope's palace." He adds indeed, "that Platina thinks that this tradition of pope Joan was not faithfully delivered to posterity. But however (says he) such a tradition there is." Concerning the first practical tradition
Platina

* Enead.
9. l. 1.

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Platina says, "that he may not deny it." For the second, "he thinks the chair rather design'd for a stool for another use, &c." He concludes, "these things which I have related are commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obscure authors: therefore I resolved (says he) briefly and nakedly to set them down, lest I should seem too obstinately and pertinaciously to have omitted that which almost all affirm." It is no wonder that he says the authors of this report were uncertain and obscure, since so very few writ any thing in that age. But suppose none had writ of it, so long as he acknowledges it to have been a general oral tradition attested by a solemn and constant practice, it has (according to Mr. S's principles) greater certainty than if it had been brought down to us by a hundred books written in that very age. So that here's an oral and practical tradition, continued we are sure for some hundreds of years, preserved and propagated by a solemn practice of the popes, clergy, and people of Rome in their processions, and by a notorious custom at the election of every pope; and in a matter of so great importance to their religion (the honour of the see of Rome, and the uninterrupted succession from St. Peter being so nearly concerned in it) that, had it been false, they had been obliged under pain of damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have used all means to have discovered the falsity of it. Therefore Mr. S. is bound by his own principles either to allow it for a truth, or else to give an account when and how it began; which may possibly

* P. 340. be made out by "we metaphysicians" (as he * styles himself, and his scientific brethren) but I assure him

† P. 337. it is past the skill of † note-book learning.

S E C T.

S E C T. X.

§ 1. **I**T is not the present persuasion of the church of Rome, nor ever was, that their faith hath descended to them by oral tradition as the sole rule of it. And this being proved, the supposition upon which his demonstration is built falls to the ground.

The fourth answer to his second demonstration.

And for the proof of this, I appeal to that * decree of the council of Trent, in which they declare, “ that because the christian faith and discipline are contained in written books and unwritten traditions, &c. therefore they do receive and honour the books of scripture and also tradition [*pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia*] with equal pious affection and reverence;” which I understand not how those do who set aside the scripture, and make tradition the sole rule of their faith. And consonantly to this decree, the general doctrine of the Romish church is, “ that scripture and tradition make up the rule of faith.” So the Roman catechism (set forth by order of the council of Trent) says, “ * that the sum of the doctrine delivered to the faithful is contained in the word of God, which is distributed into scripture and tradition.” Bellarmine * speaks to the same purpose, “ that the scripture is a rule of faith, not an entire but partial one. The entire rule is the word of God, which is divided into two partial rules, scripture, and tradition.” According to this, the adequate rule of faith is the word of God; which is contained partly in scripture, and partly in the

* Decret. primum quartæ sess.

* In præfat.

* De verbo Dei, &c. l. 4.

12.

PART. tradition of the church. And that scripture is
 III. look'd upon by them as the principal rule and pri-

mary foundation of their faith, and tradition as only
 supplying the defects of scripture, as to some doc-
 trines and rites not contained in scripture, must be
 evident to any one that has been conversant in the
 chief of their controversial divines. Bellarmine *

* De ver-
 bo Dei
 non scrip-
 to, l. 4.
 c. 9.

where he gives the marks of a divine tradition,
 speaks to this purpose, "that that which they call a
 "divine tradition is such a doctrine or rite as is
 "not found in scripture, but embraced by the
 "whole church; and for that reason believed to
 "have descended from the apostles." And he tells

* Ibid. c.
 11.

us farther, " * that the apostles committed all to
 "writing which was commonly and publicly
 "preached; and that all things are in scripture,
 "which men are bound to know and believe ex-
 "plicitly:" but then he says, "that there were
 "other things which the apostles did not common-
 "ly and publicly teach; and these they did not
 "commit to writing, but delivered them only by
 "word of mouth to the prelates and priests and
 "perfect men of the church." And these are the
 apostolical traditions he speaks of. Cardinal Perron

* Reply
 observ. 3.
 c. 4.

* says, "that the scripture is the foundation of the
 "christian doctrine, either mediately or immedi-
 "ately. And that the authority of unwritten tra-
 "dition is founded in general on these sentences of

* 2 Theff.
 ii. 15.
 † 2 Tim.
 ii. 2.

"the apostle, * hold the traditions, &c." Again,
 "† the things which thou hast heard of me among
 "many witnesses commit to faithful men, &c."
 And "that the authority of the church to preserve,
 "and especially to declare these, is founded in this
 "propo-

“ proposition, viz. * that the church is the pillar SECT. X.
 “ and ground of truth.” So that according to him, * 1 Tim. iii. 15.
 the primary rule of faith is the scripture, in which
 the authority of tradition is founded. Mr. Knott
 * says expressly, “ we acknowledge the holy scrip- * Charity maintain- ed, c. 2. sect. 1.
 “ ture to be a most perfect rule, for as much as a
 “ writing can be a rule; we only deny that it ex-
 “ cludes, either divine tradition, though it be un-
 “ written, or an external judge to keep, to pro-
 “ pose, to interpret it, &c.” So that (according
 to him) scripture is a perfect rule, only it does
 not exclude unwritten tradition, &c. by which that
 he does not understand (as Mr. S. does) a concurrent
 oral tradition of all the same doctrines which are
 contained in scripture, but other doctrines not there-
 in contained, is plain from what he says elsewhere,
 “ * we do not distinguish tradition from the writ- * Reply to Mr. Chill. c. 2. sect. 170.
 “ ten word, because tradition is not written by
 “ any, or in any book or writing; but because it
 “ is not written in the scripture or bible;” Bel-
 larmino † also says the same. And as for the in- † De ver- bo Dei, &c. l. 4. c. 2.
 terpreting of scripture, he tells us, “ that this is
 “ not the office of a rule, but of a judge.”
 “ * There is (says he) a great and plain distincti- * Charity maintain- ed, c. 2. sect. 3.
 “ on between a judge and a rule. For as in a
 “ kingdom the judge hath his rule to follow, which
 “ are the received laws and customs; which are not
 “ fit or able to declare, and be judges them-
 “ selves, but that office must belong to a living
 “ judge: so the holy scripture is and may be a rule,
 “ but cannot be a judge.” Here he makes the
 scripture as much a rule for matters of faith, as the
 laws of the land are for civil matters. And in his

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reply to Mr. Chillingworth, he hath a chapter of above 150 pages, the title whereof is, "scripture is not the only rule of faith;" which (had he with Mr. S. believed oral tradition to be the sole rule of faith) had been as absurd as it would be to write a book to prove that turks are not the only christians in the world. Mr. Cressy likewise (not very consistently to himself) lays down this conclusion;

* Exomol. c. 20. " * the entire rule of faith is contained not only in " scripture, but likewise in unwritten tradition."

* Tabul. suffrag. p. 96.

* Analyf. Ed. 1. 1. c. 6.

* C. 8.

§ 2. Now all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. Rushworth's new rule of faith. Therefore Mr. White says, * " they speak ill who teach " that some things are known in the church from " scripture, some by tradition." And Dr. Holden (in opposition to those who make scripture any part of the rule of faith) advances one of the most wild and uncharitable positions that ever I yet met withal, viz, " * that if one should believe all the articles of " the catholick faith, &c. for this reason because " he thought they were all expressly revealed in " scripture, or implicitly contained, so as they " might be deduced from thence, and would not " have believed them, had he not judged that they " might be evinced from scripture; yet this man " could be no true catholick: because (as he tells " us afterwards *) we must receive the christian " doctrine as coming to us by tradition; for only " by this means (excluding the scriptures) CHRIST " hath appointed revealed truths to be received and " communicated." In the mean time cardinal Perron (unless he altered his mind) is in a sad case, who believed the authority of tradition it self for

for this reason, because it was founded in scrip-^{SECT.}
ture. X.

§ 3. And this fundamental difference about the rule of faith, between the generality of their divines and Mr. S's small party, is fully acknowledged by the traditionists themselves. Dr. Holden says, " * that * L. 1. c. " their divines who resolve faith according to the⁹ " common opinion, do inevitably fall into that shame- " ful circle (of proving the divine authority of the " scripture by the church, and the infallibility of the " church back again by the scripture) because they " dare not build their faith upon the natural evidence " and certainty of tradition." So that Dr. Holden's way of resolving faith, is different from the common opinion of their divines, " which he says * does not * L. 1. c. " differ from the opinion of those who resolve their³ " faith into the private spirits ;" and this (according to Mr. White *) is the very way of the calvinists, * Exetaf. and of the absurdest sects. Nay, Mr. White says^{p. 70.} farther *, that he will be content to suffer all the pu- * Ibid. nishment that is due to calumniators, if the roman divines (he there speaks of) do not hold the same rule of faith with the calvinists, and all the absurdest sects. So that it seems that the calvinists, &c. do not in their rule of faith differ from the papists, but only from Mr. White, Mr. S. &c. Now the divines he there speaks of, are the censors of doctrines at Rome, according to whose advice his infallible holiness and the cardinals of the inquisition do usually proceed in censuring of doctrines. Concerning these divines he goes on to expostulate in this manner ; " * shall we endure these men to sit as censors and * Ib. p. " judges of faith, who agree with hereticks in the^{73.} " very

P A R T “ very first principle which distinguishes catholicks
III.

“ from hereticks ?” Again, “ * these are thy gods,

* P. 144. “ O Rome ! upon these thou dependest, whilst prat-
“ ing ignorance triumphs in the Roman college.”

And he says the same likewise of the generality of
the school-divines, whom he calls scepticks, because
they do not own his demonstrative way. Inasmuch

* P. 64. that he tells us, “ * that few sound parts are left unin-

† P. 149. “ fected with this plague of scepticism ; † that this is

* P. 67, “ an universal gangrene ; * that there are but few
68.

“ that go the way of demonstration, and these are ei-
“ ther wearied out, or else live retiredly, or despair

“ of any remedy of these things.” And indeed all
along that book he bemoans himself and his traditio-
nary brethren as a desolate and forlorn party, who
have truth on their side, but want company and en-

* P. 101. couragement. So he tells us, “ * that the true scien-
“ tific divines dare not profess their knowledge, lest
“ they should be exposed by the sophisters of their
“ church to the derision and scorn either of their
“ judges or of the people.”

§ 4. So that upon examination of the whole mat-
ter, it appears that Mr. S’s demonstration proceeds
upon a false supposition, “ that it is the persuasion of
“ their present church, that tradition is the sole rule
“ of faith.” For there is no such matter ; unless
Mr. S. mean by their church a few private persons,
who are looked upon by those who have the chief
power in their church as heretical : as we may reason-
ably conjecture by the proceedings at Rome against
Mr. White ; many of whose books are there con-

* Exetaf. demned, “ * as containing things manifestly hereti-

P. 9. “ cal, erroneous in the faith, rash, scandalous, sedi-
“ tious,

tious, and false respectively, &c." And all this done, notwithstanding that the chief subject of those books is the explication and defence of this most catholick principle, "that oral tradition is the only rule of faith." To sum up then the whole business: if nothing be to be owned for christian doctrine (as the traditionists say) but what is the general persuasion of those who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the roman catholick church; then much less can this principle ("that oral tradition is the sole rule of faith") which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole christian doctrine, be received as descended from CHRIST and his apostles; since it is so far from being the general persuasion of that church at present, that it has been, and still is generally disowned. But Mr. White has a salvo for this. For although he grants, "that very many of their schoolmen maintain that tradition is necessary only for some points not clearly expressed in scripture, whence (he says) it seems to follow that they build not the whole body of their faith upon tradition:" yet he tells us, "there is a vast difference betwixt relying on tradition, and saying or thinking we do so." Suppose there be; yet I hope that mens saying that they do not rely on tradition as their only rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any man's surmise to the contrary is that they do, tho' they think and say they do not; which is in effect to say that they do, tho' we have as much assurance as we can that they do not. Besides, "how is this rule self-evident to all, even to the rude vulgar as to its ruling power" (as Mr. S. affirms it is) when the greatest part even of the learned among them think

* Apolog.
P. 38.

PART think and say that it is not the only rule? But Mr.

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* Ibid.

P. 39.

* P. 30,
& 31.

White endeavours to illustrate this dark point by a
 * similitude, which is to this sense; as the scepticks
 who deny this principle, “ that contradictions can-
 “ not be true at once, yet in their lives and civil
 “ actions proceed as if they owned it:” so the
 schoolmen, though they deny tradition to be the
 only rule of faith, yet by resolving their faith into
 the church which owns this principle, they do
 also in practice own it though they say they do
 not. So that the generality of learned papists are
 just such catholicks as the scepticks are dogmatists,
 that is, a company of absurd people that confute
 their principles by their practice. According to this
 reasoning I perceive the protestants will prove as good
 catholicks as any, for they do not only think and
 say that tradition is not the rule of faith; but that
 they practically rely upon it, Mr. S. hath past his
 word for them: for he assures us * (and we may
 rely upon a man that writes nothing but demon-
 stration) “ that if we look narrowly into the bot-
 “ tom of our hearts, we shall discover the natural
 “ method of tradition, to have unawares settled our
 “ judgments concerning faith; however, when our
 “ other concerns awake design in us, we protest
 “ against it, and seem perhaps to our unreflecting
 “ selves to embrace and hold to the mere guidance
 “ of the letter of scripture.” So that in reality we
 are as good catholicks, and as true holders to tradi-
 tion as any papists of them all, at the bottom of our
 thoughts and in our settled judgment; however we
 have taken up an humour to protest against it, and
 may seem perhaps to our unreflecting selves to be
 protestants.

§ 5. Thus

§ 5. Thus much may suffice to have spoken to S E C T. XI.
 his two great arguments; or * as he (good man) P. 173.
 unfortunately calls them demonstrations; which yet
 to say truth are not properly his, but the author of
 Rushworth's dialogues, the main foundation of which
 book is the substance of these demonstrations. On-
 ly before I take leave of them, I cannot but reflect
 upon a passage of Mr. S's *, wherein he tells his * P. 163.
 readers, " that they are not obliged to bend their
 " brains to study his book with that severity as they
 " would do an euclid; " meaning perhaps one of
 Mr. White's euclids; for it does not appear by his
 way of demonstration that ever he dealt with any
 other. As for the true euclid, I suppose any one
 that hath tasted his writing, will at the reading of
 Mr. S's unbend his brains without bidding, and smile
 to see himself so demurely discharged from a study
 so absurd and ridiculous.

S E C T. XI.

§ 1. I Should now take into consideration his Concern-
 ninth discourse, in which he pretends " to ing some
 " open the incomparable strength of the church's other ad-
 " humane authority, and the advantages which accrue vantages
 " to it by the supernatural assistances of the HOLY of tradi-
 " GHOST: " but that there is nothing material in tion, &c.
 it, which hath not been answered already. Only I
 desire him to explain, how the supernatural assis-
 tances of the HOLY GHOST, can (according to his
 principles) add to our assurance of the certainty of
 tradition. Because we can have no greater certainty
 of the supernatural assistance of the HOLY GHOST,

than we have that there is an HOLY GHOST, and of this we can have no certainty (according to Mr. S.) but by tradition, which conveys this doctrine to us. And if tradition of itself can infallibly assure us that there are supernatural assistances of the HOLY GHOST, then a man must know that tradition is infallible antecedently to his knowledge of any supernatural assistance. And if so, what can any supernatural assistance add to my assurance of the certainty of tradition, which I do suppose to be infallible before I can know of any supernatural assistance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build first all our certainty of the assistance of the HOLY GHOST upon the certainty of tradition, and then afterwards to make the certainty of tradition to rely upon the assistance of the HOLY GHOST? as if that could contribute to our assurance of the certainty of tradition, which unless tradition be first supposed certain, is it self wholly uncertain.

§ 2. The conclusion of this ninth discourse is somewhat ecstasical; possibly from a sudden disorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to see what a man he has made of himself (with the help of Rushworth's dialogues) or rather what his party has made him by the office they put upon him: for it seems (by his telling) “* Mr. Cressy and the rest are ordained to cajole the fools, leaving him the way of reason and principles; and that himself is chosen out to demonstrate to the wise, or those who judge of things *per altissimas causas*.” In the discharge of which glorious office, he declares, “that he intends no confutation
“ of

* P. 165,
166.

“ of those authors which Mr. Cressy and others have
 “ meddled with: yet if any will be so charitable as
 “ to judge he hath solidly confuted them, because
 “ he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown
 “ all their arguments, &c. he shall rejoice and be
 “ thankful.” That the * intelligent reader (for he * P. 159.
 writes to none but such) may also rejoice with him,
 I shall recite the whole passage, for it is thick of
 demonstration, and as likely as any in his book to
 have the *altissimas causas* contained in it.

§ 3. “ * It would require a large volume to un- * P. 93.
 “ fold particularly how each virtue contributes to
 “ shew the inerrable indeficiency of tradition, and
 “ how the principles of almost each science are con-
 “ cerned in demonstrating its certainty: arithme-
 “ tick lends her numbring and multiplying faculty,
 “ to scan the vast number of testifiers; geometry
 “ her proportions to shew a kind of infinite
 “ strength of certitude in christian tradition, above
 “ those attestations which breed certainty in hu-
 “ mane affairs; logick her skill to frame and make
 “ us see the connexions it has with the princi-
 “ ples of our understanding; nature her laws of
 “ motion and action; morality her first principles
 “ that nothing is done gratis by a cognoscitive na-
 “ ture, and that the body of traditionary doctrine
 “ is most conformable to practical reason: histori-
 “ cal prudence clears the impossibility of an undi-
 “ cernable revolt from points so descended and held
 “ so sacred: politicks shew this to be the best way
 “ imaginable to convey down such a law as it con-
 “ cerns every man to be skilful in; metaphysicks
 “ engages the essences of things, and the very notion

PART
III.

“ of being which fixes every truth, so establishing
 “ the scientific knowledges which spring from each
 “ particular nature by their first causes or reasons
 “ exempt from changes or motion. Divinity demon-
 “ strates it most worthy God, and most conducive
 “ to bring mankind to bliss. Lastly, controversy
 “ evidences the total uncertainty of any thing con-
 “ cerning faith if this can be uncertain, and makes
 “ use of all the rest to establish the certainty of
 “ this first principle.” A very fit conclusion for
 such demonstrations as went before. It is well Mr.
 S. writes to none but intelligent readers; for were it
 not a thousand pities, that so manly, and solid, and
 convincing a discourse as this should be cast away
 upon fools?

S E C T. XII.

Mr. S's
 corollaries
 consider'd.

§ 1. **A**S for his corollaries, supposing them to
 be rightly deduced from his former dis-
 courses, they must of necessity fall with them. For
 they signify nothing, but upon this supposition that
 his foregoing discourses are true. And yet this being
 granted, it were easy to shew that most of them are
 grossly faulty. For first, several of them are plainly
 coincident. The second, viz. “None can with right
 “pretend to be a church, but the followers of tradi-
 “tion,” is the very same in sense with the 11th, viz.
 “No company of men hang together like a body of
 “a christian commonwealth or church, but that
 “which adheres to tradition.” So likewise the 12th
 and 14th are contained in the 15th: the 16th and
 17th in the 19th: the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th, in
 the

the 21st. And the 32d and 34th in the 31st. Secondly, divers of them are manifestly absurd, as the 12th, 13th, 14th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th; the sum of which is, "that there is no arguing against tradition from scripture, or the authority of the church, or fathers and councils, or from history and testimonial writings, or from contrary tradition, or reason, or any instances whatsoever:" which is as much as to say, "if this proposition be true, that tradition is certain, then it cannot by any kind of argument be proved to be false." But is this any peculiar consequence from the truth of this proposition? doth not the same follow from every proposition, that if it be true, it cannot be proved to be false? yet no man was ever yet so frivolous, as to draw such a consequence from the supposed truth of any proposition. His 23d also is singularly absurd, "that there is no possibility of arguing at all against tradition rightly understood, or the living voice of the catholick church, with any shew of reason." These are large words. It might have contented a reasonable man to have said, that no good argument could be brought against it: but he is jealous of his hypothesis, and can never think it safe till it be shot-free; nor will that content him, but it must also be impossible for any one to make a shew of shooting at it. This were, I confess, a peculiar privilege of Mr. S's discourses above others; if they were (as he says) by evidence of demonstration so secured, that not only no substantial argument could be brought against them, but that even the most subtle schoolman of them all should not be able to come near them with so much as a *videtur quod non*. But it may be he means no more by this

PART this corollary, than what he said in the 18th, viz.
 III.

“ that no solid argument from reason can be brought
 “ against tradition :” If so, then the sense of his
 23d corollary must be this, “ that there is no possi-
 “ bility of arguing at all against tradition with any
 “ solid shew, or substantial shadow of reason ;” which
 would be a little inconvenient. I will instance but in
 one more, his 40th, which is this, “ the knowledge
 “ of tradition’s certainty is the first knowledge or
 “ principle in controversial divinity ; i. e. without
 “ which nothing is known or knowable in that sci-
 “ ence.” Which is to infer, that because he hath
 with much pains proved the certainty of tradition,
 therefore it is self-evident, i. e. needed no proof.
 Nay, it is to conclude the present matter in contro-
 versy, and that which is the main debate of his book
 to be the first principle in controversial divinity, i. e.
 such a proposition as every one ought to grant before
 he can have any right to dispute about it. This is a
 very prudent course, to make begging the first ques-
 tion the first principle in controversy ; which would it
 but be granted, I am very much of his mind that the
 method he takes would be the best way to make con-
 troversy a science ; because he that should have the
 luck or boldness to beg first, would have it in his
 power to make what he pleased certain.

§ 2. Were it worth while, I might farther pursue
 the absurdities of his corollaries. For they are not so
 terrible as he makes shew of, by his telling Dr. Ca-
 faubon, “ * that sure-footing and its corollaries may
 “ put him out of his wits :” which though intended
 for an affront to the doctor, yet it may be mollified
 with a good interpretation ; for if the reading of
 wild

* P. 330.

wild and fantastical stuff be apt to disorder a very learned head, then so far Mr. S's saying may have truth in it.

It remains only that I requite his 4th corollary, not with an equal number, but with two or three natural consecratories from the doctrine of his book.

First, no man can certainly understand the meaning of any book whatsoever, any farther than the contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent oral tradition. For the arguments whereby he and Mr. Rushworth endeavour to prove it impossible without tradition to attain to the certain sense of scripture, do equally extend to all other books.

Secondly, the memory of matters of fact done long ago may be better preserved by general rumour than by publick records. For this is the plain english of that assertion, "that oral tradition is a better and more secure way of conveyance than writing."

Thirdly, that the generality of papists are no christians: for if (as he affirms) tradition be the sole rule of faith, and those who disown this rule be *ipso facto* cut off from the root of faith, i. e. unchristian'd; and if (as I have shewn) the generality of papists do disown this rule: then it is plain that they are no christians.

THE

THE RULE of FAITH.

PART IV.

Testimonies concerning the rule of faith.

SECT. I.

PART § I. IV.

Mr. S's
testimonies
examined.

* P. 337.

THUS far in the way of reason and principles. The rest is note-book learning, which he tells us “* he is not much a friend to;” and there is no kindness lost, for it is as little a friend to him and his cause as he can be to it. I shall first examine the authorities he brings for tradition; and then produce express testimonies in behalf of scripture. In both which I shall be very brief; in the one, because his testimonies require no long answer; in the other, because it would be to little purpose to trouble Mr. S. with many fathers, who, for ought appears by his book, is acquainted with none but father White, as I shall shew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the course he uses to take with other mens testimonies, because it is the only way that a man in his circumstances can take; otherwise, nothing can be in it self more unreasonable, than to pretend to answer testimonies by ranking them under so many faulty heads; and having so done, magisterially to require his adversary

versary to vindicate them, by shewing that they do SECT. I.
 not fall under some of those heads, though he
 have not said one word against any of them par-
 ticularly; nay, though he have not so much as re-
 cited any one of them; for then the trick would
 be spoiled, and his catholick reader, who perhaps
 may believe him in the general, might see rea-
 son not to do so if he should descend to particu-
 lars, which (as he well observes) would make his
 “ * discourse to look with a contingent face.” * P. 161.

§ 2. I begin with his three authorities from scrip-
 ture; which when I consider, I see no reason why he
 (of all men) should find fault with my lord bishop
 of Down's dissuasive for being so “ * thin and” P. 320.
 “ sleight in scripture-citations.” Nor do I see
 how he will answer it to Mr. Rushworth, for
 transgressing that prudent rule of his, viz. “ * that” Dial. 2.
 “ the catholick should never undertake to convince” sect. 4.
 “ his adversary out of scripture, &c.” For which
 he gives this substantial reason, “ * because this” Ibid.
 “ were to strengthen his opponent in his own ground
 “ and principle, viz. that all is to be proved out
 “ of scripture;” which he tells us presently after is
 no more fit to convince, “ than a beetle is to cut
 “ withal;” meaning it perhaps of texts so ap-
 plied as these which follow. “ * This shall be” Isa. 35.
 “ to you, a direct way, so that fools cannot err” 8.
 “ in it. † This is my covenant with them, saith † Isa. 59.
 “ the LORD; my spirit which is in thee, and my” 21.
 “ words which I have put in thy mouth shall not de-
 “ part from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy
 “ seed, and from the mouth of thy seeds seed from
 “ henceforth for ever. * I will give my law in their” Jer. 31.
 “ bowels, 33.

PART
IV.

“ bowels, and in their hearts will I write it :”
 From which texts if Mr. S. can prove tradition to be the only rule of faith, any better than the philosophers stone or the longitude may be proved from the first chapter of Genesis, I am content they should pass for valid testimonies : tho’ I might require of him (by his own law) before these texts can signify any thing to his purpose, to demonstrate that this is the traditionary sense of these texts, and that it hath been universally in all ages received by the church under that notion ; and then to shew how it comes to pass that so many of the fathers, and of their own commentators have interpreted them to another sense : and lastly, to shew how scripture which has no certain sense but from tradition, and of the sense whereof tradition cannot assure us, unless it be the rule of faith ; I say, how scripture can prove tradition to be the rule of faith, which can prove nothing at all unless tradition be first proved to be the rule of faith. This I take to be as shameful a circle, as that wherewith Dr. Holden upbraids the generality of his brethren.

§ 3. I proceed to his authorities from fathers and councils ; (all which not one of them excepted) he hath taken out of Mr. White’s *tabulæ suffragiales*, without the least acknowledgment from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not consulted the books themselves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very same errors of citation which Mr. White had been guilty of before him. So that though

* P. 239. he is pleased to say of himself “ that * he is a bad

“ tran-

“transcriber,” yet I must do him that right, to assure the reader that he does it very punctually and exactly. SECT.
I.

§ 4. He begins with councils, of which he tells us he will only mention three in several ages.

The first is the first synod of Lateran. One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in several ages, he should have produced them according to the order of time, and have begun with the council of Sardica, which was near 300 years before the Lateran. But there was a good reason why the Lateran should be first produced, viz. because it is mentioned before the other in Mr. White's book. Well, but what says this synod? “we all confess unanimously, and consequently with one heart and mouth, the tenets and sayings of the holy fathers; adding nothing, subtracting nothing of those things which are delivered us by them; and we believe as the fathers have believed, we preach so as they have taught.” The force of which testimony Mr. S. lays upon the word delivered, as if that word where-ever it is met with in councils or fathers, must needs be understood of oral delivery; whereas it is a general word indifferently used for conveyance either by writing or word of mouth. In this place it plainly refers to the writings of particular fathers, out of whom a long catalogue of testimonies against the heresy of the monothelites had been read just before this declaration of the synod. Now what signifies this to oral tradition's being the rule of faith, that this synod declares her faith, in opposition to the heresy of the monothelites, to be consonant in all

PART things to those testimonies which had been produced
 IV. out of the fathers?

The next is the council of Sardica; out of an epistle of which council he cites these words, “ we have received this doctrine, we have been taught so, we hold this catholick tradition, faith and confession.” Which are general words, and indifferently applicable to oral tradition, or writing, or both. But be they what they will, Mr. S. ought not to have been ignorant, that this council was rejected by St. Austin, and other orthodox fathers, as * Binius acknowledges; and which is more, that the latter part of this epistle (out of which part Mr. S. cites these words) which contains a confession of faith, is by * Baronius (and after him by Binius) proved to have been surreptitiously added. For though it be found in Theodoret, and mentioned by Sozomen; yet Baronius thinks that it was the arian confession composed by the false synod of Sardica which sate at the same time; and that Sozomen lighting upon it, perhaps mistook it for the confession of the orthodox synod of the same name. However that be, he proves out of Athanasius, and from the testimony both of the eastern and western bishops, “ that council of Sardica did not so much “ as add one word or tittle, no nor so much as “ explain any thing in the Nicene faith.” But Mr. White says nothing of this, and therefore Mr. S. could not, who is no speculator in these matters, but only as a testifier delivers down these authorities to us as he received them by hand from Mr. White; and if the word tradition be but in them, they are demonstrative.

As

* Concil.
 tom. 1.

* An. 347.

As for his testimonies from the second council of SECT. I. Nice, (which he calls the seventh general council) who pretended their doctrine of image-worship to have descended to them by an uninterrupted tradition, and proved it most doughtily by texts of scripture ridiculously wrested, by impertinent sayings out of obscure and counterfeit authors, and by fond and immodest stories (as is acknowledged by pope * Adrian the 6th) of apparitions and womens dreams, &c. for which I refer the reader to the council it self; which is such a mess of fopperies, that if a general council of atheists had met together with a design to abuse religion by talking ridiculously concerning it, they could not have it done more effectually: I say, as for his testimonies from this council, I shall refer Mr. S. to that western council under Charles the great, which a little after at Francfort condemned, and also fully confuted the decisions of this council, calling their pretended "tradition of image-worship [*putidissimam traditionem*] a most stinking tradition."

* Quodlibet 6, cited by Espenæus in 2d. epist. ad Tim. c. 4.

These are his authorities from councils; "where" says he) we see general councils relying on the "teaching of the fathers or foregoing church, and" "on the church's tradition as their rule, &c." where does he see any such matter? or where does he see general councils? was the council of Lateran a general one? or was the council of Sardica? if it was, let him shew how the second of Nice could be the seventh general council. Mr. White must write more explicitly, and say which are general councils, which not, otherwise he will lead his friends into dangerous mistakes.

§ 4. "After

PART
IV.

§ 4. "After ancient councils (not so ancient neither) let us (says he) give a glance at fathers." Glance is a modest word, and yet I doubt whether ever the fathers had so much as that from him. Before I speak particularly to his testimonies from the fathers, I shall mind him of what Mr. Rushworth says in general, viz. " * that he who seeks tradition in the fathers, and to evince it by their testimony, takes an hard task upon him, &c." * Dial. 3. sect. 13. † Ibid. Again, " † as in other points, so even in this of the resolution of faith, as doctors seem to differ now-a-days, so might the fathers also." If this be true, Mr. S. is not likely by a few testimonies out of the fathers, to prove that tradition is the sole rule of faith. But let us see what he has done towards it.

He begins with a saying of pope Celestine to the fathers of the Ephesine council. " Now therefore we must act with a common endeavour to preserve things believed, and retained to this very time by succession from the apostles." Binius's other reading of [*διαδοχῆς* for *διαδοχοῦ*] quite spoils the force of this citation which Mr. S. put upon the word succession. But read it how he will; why may not the christian doctrine be said to come by succession from the apostles, when it is transmitted to us by scripture, as well as when by oral tradition? I am sure the same Celestine in an epistle to Cyril, commends him for defending the faith by scripture: " this (says he) is a great triumph of our faith, to demonstrate our opinions so strongly, and to overthrow the contrary by testimonies from scripture." And neither in this epistle,
nor

nor the other, does he make any mention of oral tradition. SECT.
I.

Next he cites that known place in Irenæus :
 “ but what if the apostles had not left us the scriptures, ought we not to follow the order of tradition, &c. ? ” this makes clearly against him ; for it implies, that now the apostles have left us the scriptures, we ought to follow them. The other passage he cites out of Irenæus, lib. 1. c. 3. is a clear eviſion that he did not conſult the book. For he puts two ſayings together which he had met with in Mr. White, immediately one after the other ; and becauſe Mr. White had cited lib. 1. c. 3. for the firſt ſaying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an (*et ruruſus*) again, &c. Therefore Mr. S. (who is of a right traditionary temper, which is to take things eaſily upon truſt himſelf, and require demonſtration from others) concluded that theſe ſayings were in the ſame place, though in truth they are in ſeveral books. As for the teſtimony it ſelf, there is nothing in it to Mr. S’s purpoſe beſides the word tradition, which Irenæus does often apply to ſcripture as well as oral tradition ; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to oral tradition.

His teſtimonies out of Origen will do him leſs ſtead : for every one that hath been converſant in the writings of that father, knows what he means by the church’s tradition preſerved by order of ſucceſſion, viz. the myſtical interpretations of the ſcripture, which (he ſays) were delivered by the apoſtles to the governors of the church, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the tradition Mr. S. contends

PART tends for, Origen is at his service ; if it be not, I assure him he is not for his turn.

IV.

Next comes Tertullian, concerning whom (as also Origen) the papist upon occasion thinks it enough to reply in St. Hierom's words*, "as for Tertullian, Helvid. "I have nothing to say of him but that he is not "a man of the church." Whatever he was, these are his words, "if thou beest but a christian, believe what is [*traditum*] delivered." And here's nothing again but the word delivered ; which (as I have said) is indifferent to written or oral tradition, if the circumstances do not determine it to one ; as here they do (very unluckily for Mr. S.) to the scripture. For he disputes here against Marcion, who denied the flesh of CHRIST ; and who to main-

* His opinion confirmed by original instruments of Christ's delivery. Marcion's cause is not to be proved by oral testimony, authority, &c.

tain that, denied his nativity, and * expunged the whole history of it out of the gospel ; "but (saith Tertullian) by what authority dost thou this ? "if thou be a prophet, foretell something ; if an apostle, preach publicly ; if apostolical, be of the apostle's mind ; if no more but a christian, believe what is delivered." And where delivered ? but in those instruments or books of the gospel, out of which (as Tertullian immediately before tells us) Marcion had made bold to expunge this story.

As for his testimonies out of Athanasius, the two first of them prove nothing, "but that faith comes down from our ancestors, or was by them delivered to us ;" which no body denies : nor is there a word in either of them concerning oral, in opposition to written tradition. The third testimony is out of an epistle to Epictetus, to whom Athanasius writing concerning those who held CHRIST's body

body to be consubstantial with his divinity, tells him SECT.
I.
this was so gross a conceit, that it needed no solicitous confutation; but that it would be a sufficient answer to say in general, "the orthodox church was not of that mind, our fathers did not think so." From whence Mr. S. infers, "that tradition is held by him a sole sufficient rule of faith, and the only answer to be given why we reject points from faith, &c." But if he had consulted the book, he would not have inferred that this was the only answer to be given, &c. For it immediately follows, "but lest from our being wholly silent, the inventors of evil things should take occasion to be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few passages out of scripture, &c." And from thence he confutes them at large. It was so gross an error, that he thought it might be sufficient, without bringing particular arguments out of scripture against it, to say that it was contrary to the ancient faith; but yet lest they should (if he had said no more) have taken boldness from thence, and thought that nothing more could be said against it, therefore he confutes it from particular texts of scripture. And what in his opinion was the sufficient rule of faith, Mr. S. might have seen at the beginning of this epistle, from these words, "that faith which was professed by the fathers in that council (viz. the Nicene) according to the scriptures, is to me sufficient, &c." It seems that scripture was to him the rule and standard whereby to judge even the creeds of general councils.

Mr. S. says he, will be shorter in the rest, and so will I. For what is to be said to testimonies brought

PART at a venture? when he that brings them, had he
 IV. read the books themselves, could not have had the
 face to have brought them. Such is this out of
 *Stromat. *Clem. Alexand. "as if one of a man becomes a
 l. 7. "beast, like those infected with Circe's poison; so
 "he hath forfeited his being a man of God and
 "faithful to our LORD, who spurns against ecclesia-
 "stical tradition, and leaps into opinions of hu-
 "mane election." Mr. S. knows whose way of
 quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midst of
 a text that sounds something towards his purpose,
 and leave out the rest which would make it evi-
 dent to be meant just contrary. Yet I cannot
 charge this wholly upon Mr. S. whose implicit
 faith were it not for his culpable ignorance might
 excuse him. But for his seducer Mr. White, how
 he can acquit himself of so foul an imputation, I
 leave it to any ingenuous papist to judge, when I
 have nakedly set the whole passage before him. Cle-
 ment speaking of hereticks who relinquish the scrip-
 ture, or abuse it by wresting it to their lusts, says,
 "men who deal in matters of highest importance,
 "must need commit great errors, if they do not
 "take and hold the RULE of FAITH from
 "truth itself. For such men having once deviated
 "from the right way, do likewise err in most parti-
 "culars; probably because they have not the facul-
 "ty of distinguishing truths and falsehoods, perfect-
 "ly exercised, to choose what ought to be chosen.
 "For if they had this, they would be ruled by the
 "divine SCRIPTURES. [Therefore as if any
 "of mankind should become a beast in such sort as
 "those who were *bewitched by Circe; even so he
 "hath

* pap-
 maxθε-
 σιν.

The RULE of FAITH.

767

“ hath lost his being a man of God and abiding SECT. I.
 “ faithful to the LORD, who hath spurned against
 “ the tradition of the church, and skipp’d into the
 “ opinions of humane sects *,] (not of humane elec- * ἀποστο-
 “ tion, as Mr. S. blindly following Mr. White does ωρ.
 “ most absurdly translate it) but he that hath re-
 “ turned from his errors, and hearkened to the
 “ SCRIPTURES, and conformed his life to the
 “ truth, is as it were advanced from a man to a God.”

At the same rate he goes on for several pages together, taking the scriptures for an indemonstrable principle, from which all divine doctrines are to be demonstrated, and for the criterion whereby they are to be tried, and charges the hereticks in such words as we cannot find fitter for adversaries, “ as
 “ (says he) naughty boys shut out their schoolmaster, so these drive the prophecies out of the church,
 “ suspecting that they will chide and admonish
 “ them; and they patch together abundance of falsehoods and fictions that they may seem RATIO-
 “ NALLY not to admit the scriptures.” Again, speaking of those hereticks affronting the scripture, he tells us, “ they oppose the * divine tradition with
 “ humane doctrines, † by other traditions [delivered
 “ from hand to hand] that they may establish a sect
 “ or heresy.” Again, he says, “ they adulterate the
 “ truth, and steal the rule of faith, &c. but for
 “ ORAL frauds they shall have WRITTEN
 “ punishments.” But enough of this; whosoever desires to see more of it, let him read on where these men to their own shame have directed us, and see whether any protestant can speak more fully and plainly in this controversy. The whole trust of the

* Θεα.
 παραδό-
 † δι' ἐτέ-
 ωρ πα-
 ρεργει-
 ρησεων.

PART
IV.

papists is upon the equivocal sense of the word tradition. Which word is commonly used by the fathers to signify to us the scripture or divine tradition, as Clement here calls it; but the papists understand it of their unwritten tradition, and to this they apply all those passages in the fathers where tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. S. deals with us in the testimonies I have already examined; and there is nothing of argument in those few which remain, but from the ambiguity of this word; which I need not shew of every one of them in particular, for whosoever shall read them with this key will find that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

§ 5. As for his citations out of the council of Trent, by which he would prove it to be the persuasion of their present church, that tradition is the sole rule of faith; I have already shewn that that council hath declared otherwise, and is otherwise understood by the chief of their own writers. And therefore he did prudently to conceal in an &c. those choking words, in which the council declares itself “to receive and honour, with equal pious affection and reverence, the books of scripture and unwritten traditions.” And after a deal of shuffling, what a pitiful account is it that he at last gives of that council’s putting scripture constantly before tradition, because scripture being interpreted by tradition, is of the same authority “as if an apostle or an evangelist were present, and therefore no wonder they honour scripture-testimony so as to put it before tradition;” which is to say, that because scripture is subordinate to tradition,

dition, and to be regulated by it, therefore it deserves to be put before it. Besides, if scripture and tradition be but several ways of conveying the evangelical and apostolical doctrine, why should he imagine an evangelist or apostle to be more present by the scripture than by oral tradition? especially if it be considered, that he supposes scripture to be an uncertain, and tradition an infallible way of conveying this doctrine.

SECT.
II.

SECT. II.

§ 1. ALL that now remains, is to confirm the precedent discourse by testimonies of the most eminent persons of the church, in several ages; in which I shall not need to be large, being so happily prevented by that full account which is given of the sense of the ancients in this matter, in the answer to *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*; which Mr. S. may if he please consult for his farther conviction.

Testimonies on the behalf of scripture.

§ 2. I begin with the historical account which Eusebius gives of committing the gospel to writing; which is to this purpose, viz. “ * that the Romans * were not content with the doctrine preached, “ unless it were also committed to writing; and “ therefore did earnestly beg of Mark, Peter’s “ companion, that he would leave them a monument in writing of that doctrine which had been “ delivered to them by word of mouth. And this “ was the occasion of the writing of St. Mark’s “ gospel. And when Peter did understand that this “ work was publish’d (being suggested by the divine

Histor. eccles. l. 2. c. 14.

vine

PART "vine revelation of the HOLY SPIRIT) it is said
IV. "he was very much pleased with the ready and

"earnest desire of those persons; and that by his
 "authority he confirmed this writing, to the end
 "that it might be every where read in the church."

As for St. Matthew and St. John, he tells us,

* Ibid. l. " * that of all the disciples, they two only have left
 3. c. 18. " monuments in writing; of whom it is also report-

"ted that they betook themselves to write, being
 "drawn thereto by necessity. Matthew, after he
 "had preached the word of God to the jews, and
 "was resolved to go to other nations, wrote his
 "gospel in the language of his country; and thus
 "by the diligence and pains of writing, did abundantly supply the want of his presence to those
 "whom he left. And when Mark and Luke had
 "publish'd their gospel, it is reported that John
 "(who had always used to preach the word without writing it) being at length wrought upon by
 "the same reason did betake himself to write."

From this account it is clear, that the apostles thought it necessary, for the preservation and secure conveyance of the christian doctrine, that it should be put into writing; and that they judged this a better way to supply the want of their presence than oral tradition. Therefore the same au-

* Ibid. c. 31. "thor tells us*, "that the disciples, who immediately

"ly succeeded the apostles, as they travelled to
 "preach the gospel to those who had not yet heard
 "the word of faith, did with great care also deliver to them the writings of the holy evangelists."

* Ibid. c. 30. "Again, " * that Ignatius as he travelled towards
 "Rome (where he was to suffer) exhorted the

"churches

“ churches of every city to hold fast the tradition SECT. II.
 “ of the apostles; which (as also by writing he tes-
 “ tified) for the greater security he held necessary to
 “ be copied in writing.”

§ 4. That the hereticks of old made the same
 “ pretence which the papists make now, of oral tra-
 “ dition in opposition to scripture, the same Eusebius
 “ tells us; and withal, that books are a sufficient con-
 “ futation of this pretence. “ * Those (says he) who * Ibid. l. 5. c. 27.
 “ were of the heresy of Artemon, said that all their
 “ forefathers and the apostles themselves had re-
 “ ceived and taught the same things which they
 “ also did, and had preserved the true teaching un-
 “ to the time of Victor bishop of Rome, whose suc-
 “ cessor Zephyrinus corrupted it. And this (saith
 “ he) would have great probability, were it not first
 “ of all contradicted by the scripture; and next, if
 “ there did not remain the writings of other bre-
 “ thren much more ancient than Victor’s time,
 “ &c. in the books of all whom CHRIST’S divini-
 “ ty is acknowledged.” And afterwards he tells us,
 “ that these hereticks did change and corrupt the scrip-
 “ tures to bring them to their opinions; so Mr. S.
 “ tells us, “ that the outward letter of scripture ought
 “ to be corrected by tradition and sense written in
 “ mens hearts.”

St. Hierom also tells us, “ * that the hereticks * Com. in Isa. c. 19.
 “ were wont to say, we are the sons of the wise,
 “ who did from the beginning deliver down to
 “ us the apostolical doctrine;” but he adds, “that
 “ the true sons of Judah adhere to the scrip-
 “ ture.”

§ 4. That

PART
IV.

§ 4. That scripture is sufficiently plain in all things necessary.

* In 2 St. Chrysostom, “ * all things in the divine scriptures are plain and straight. Whatsoever things are necessary are manifest.”

St. Austin having spoken of the profoundness of
* Epist. 3. scripture, adds, “ not that those things which are necessary to salvation are so hard to be come at: but (saith he) when one hath there attained faith, without which there is no pious and right living, there are besides many dark and mysterious things,

* Ibid. “ &c.” Again *, “ the manner of speech in scripture how easy is it to all, though few can penetrate to the bottom of it? those things which it plainly contains, it speaks without disguise like a familiar friend to the heart of the learned and unlearned.” How will Mr. S. reconcile this with his great exception against scripture? And what these things are, which are plainly contained in scripture, the same father tells us

* De doctr. Christi. l. 3. c. 9. elsewhere, in these words, “ * among those things which are plainly set down in scripture, all those things are to be found which comprehend faith and good manners.” The same St. Austin (as also Clement in the book which Mr. White quoted) for the understanding of obscure texts of scripture, directs us not to tradition, but to the

* De unite eccles. c. 5. plain text, without which he expressly says, “ * there would be no way to understand them.”

§ 5. That scripture is so plain, as to be fit to determine controversies.

Justin sure thought so, when disputing with Trypho, concerning a point wherein the Jew had tradition

tradition on his side, he told him " he would
" bring such proofs (to the contrary) as no man
" could gainsay : attend (says he) to what I shall
" recite out of the holy scriptures, proofs which
" need not to be explained, but only to be heard."
Mr. White might have found likewise much to
this purpose in his Clement.

But not to tire my reader in a point which
the ancients abound with, I shall only produce
the judgment of Constantine * in that solemn ora- * Theo-
tion of his to the council of Nice, wherein he doret.
bewails " their mutual oppositions, especially in Hist. l. 1.
" divine things ;" concerning which they had c. 7.
the doctrine of the HOLY SPIRIT recorded in
writing ; " for (says he) the books of the evan-
" gelists and apostles, and the oracles of the old
" prophets, do evidently teach us what we ought
" to think of the divine majesty. Therefore laying
" aside all seditious contention, let us determine the
" matters in question by testimonies out of the di-
" vine writings." Not a word of any other tradi-
tion but scripture, which was held evident enough
in those days, though now Mr. S. tells us it is not
sufficient to decide that controversy about the di-
vinity of CHRIST.

§ 6. Lastly, that scripture is the rule of faith.

Irenæus : " * the method of our salvation we * L. 3.
" have not known by any other but those men 1.
" by whom the gospel came to us, which then
" they preached, but afterwards by the will of
" GOD delivered it to us in the scriptures, to be
" for the future the foundation and pillar of our
" faith."

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St. Cyprian, the church hath ever held a good catholick ; yet Mr. S. * takes notice that he erred in a point of faith ; and perhaps the rather, because Mr. Rushworth † had told him that he was not theirs in this controversy. “For (says he) St. Cyprian

† Dial. 3.
sect. 13.

“ seems to think that the resolution of faith was to be made into scripture, and not into tradition.”

But that we may not seem to accept of this courtesy from him, nor yet wholly to despise it, I shall offer this one testimony instead of many out of that father ; who being opposed with an argument

* Epist. 74.

from tradition, demands, “ * whence have you that tradition ? comes it from the authority of the LORD, and of the gospel ; or from the epistles of the apostles ? For GOD testifies that we are to do those things which are written, &c. If it be commanded in the gospel, or contained in the epistles or acts of the apostles, then let us observe it as a divine and holy tradition.”

* Ad Constant.

Hilary * commends Constantius the emperor “ for regulating the faith only according to those things which are written,” And to oblige him to deserve this commendation, he adds, “ he who refuses this is antichrist, and who dissembles in it is anathema.”

* Lib. 5.
de schism.
Donat.

Optatus *, concerning the controversy with the donatists, asks who shall be judge ? and answers himself, “ the scriptures :” which he illustrates by the similitude of a father who delivered his will orally to his children while he was living, but when he was dying, caused it to be written in lasting tables, to decide all controversies that might happen

pen among them after his death. The passage is SECT. II. large, and it is obvious to apply it.

Basil maintaining the doxology as it was used in his days, says, “ * thus we received it from our fathers ;” but adds immediately, “ this is not enough for us, that it is the tradition of the fathers, for they followed the authority of the scriptures, making its testimonies the principles upon which they built.” He has indeed in the same book * a passage much insisted on by the papists concerning unwritten traditions ; but withal, he says those traditions were secretly conveyed, which makes all the rest of no use to Mr. S.

Chrysostom * having mentioned several heresies, * Hom. 8. directs how they may be avoided, viz. “ by attending to the faith delivered, and looking upon all that disagrees from that as adulterate. For (says he) as those who give rules do not put men upon a curious enquiry after any measures, but bid them keep to the rule given ; so it is in opinions. But no body will attend to the scriptures ; if we did, we should not only not fall into errors ourselves, but also rescue those that are deceived.”

Again, “ * if we would be thoroughly conversant in the scriptures, we should be instructed both in right opinions and a good life.” Again, “ among the many sects of christians * it will be easy to judge of the right, if we believe the scriptures, because they are plain and true : if any one agree with these he is a christian ; if he contradicts them he is far from this rule.”

PART. St. Austin calls the scripture, * the divine ba-
IV. lance for the weighing of doctrines. Again, "the

* De Bapt. " holy scripture (says he) fixeth the rule of our
cont. do- " doctrine." And accordingly himself uses it both
nat. l. 2. in his dispute with Maximinus, to whom he says,
c. 6.

* Contr. " * Neither ought I now to alledge the Nicene
Max. l. 3. council, nor thou that of *Ariminum* : for neither
" am I bound to the authority of the one, nor thou
" of the other. Let us both contest with the au-
" thorities of scripture, which are witnesses com-
" mon to us both." And also against the dona-

* De uni- tists in these words : " * let them, if they can,
tat. ecclef. " demonstrate their church not by the talk and ru-
c. 16. " mours [or oral tradition] of the Africans, not
" by the councils of their own bishops, not by
" the books of their disputers, not by deceitful mi-
" racles, &c. but by the prescript of the law, pro-
" phets, &c. i. e. by all the canonical authorities of
" the holy books."

* Com- Hierom saith, " of those things, which without
ment. in " the authorities and testimonies of the scripture,
Agg. c. 1. " men invent of their own heads as from aposto-
" lical tradition, they are smitten with the sword
" of God."

Theophilus Alexander whom Hierom hath trans-
* Paschal. lated, calls scripture more than once * the rule,
l. 3. and the testimonies of it the firm foundations of
† L. 3. doctrine. And again saith, " † It comes from a de-
" moniacal spirit that men follow the sophisms of
" humane minds, and think any thing divine that
" wants the authority of scripture."

* Hæret. Theodoret * charges all heresies upon the not
fi b. l. 1. 5. following of scripture, which he calls " the in-
" flexible

“flexible rule of truth.” Again, “we have learned SECT. II.
“the rule of opinion from the divine scripture.”

After the fathers, I shall produce the testimonies of two eminent persons of latter times, Gerson and Lyra.

Gerson in his * book of the trial of doctrines, * Part 1. hath this remarkable passage; “in the trial of Confid. 2.
“doctrines, that which is first and principally to
“be considered, is, whether a doctrine be confor-
“mable to the holy scripture, &c. The reason of
“this is, because the scripture is delivered to us as a
“**SUFFICIENT and INFALLIBLE RULE** for
“the government of the whole ecclesiastical body and
“its members to the end of the world. So that
“it is such an art, such a rule or exemplar, that
“any other doctrine which is not conformable
“to it, is to be renounced as heretical, or to be
“accounted suspicious, or not at all appertain-
“ing to religion.” Again, “* it is evident how * De di-
“pernicious the rejection of the holy scripture is, stinct. ve-
rar. vision.
a falsis.
“and how certain a preparatory for the reception of
“antichrist.” Once more, “† what mischief, what † Serm. in
“danger, what confusion hath happened through die cir-
cumcis.
“contempt of the holy scripture, which sure is &c,
“sufficient for the government of the church (else
“CHRIST must have been an imperfect lawgiver)
“let us ask experience, &c.”

Lyra also writes thus; “* as in philosophy truth * Prolog.
“is discovered by reducing things to their first and de lib. bib.
&c.
“self-evident principles; so in the writings deli-
“vered by the holy doctors, truth is discovered, as
“to matters of faith, by reducing them to the ca-
“nonical scriptures.”

Sir,

PART. Sir,
IV.

“ you know how easy it were to swell up a
“ large volume with testimonies to this pur-
“ pose; especially if I should take the course
“ that Mr. White does, to hale in quotations
“ though ever so impertinent; or use the wretch-
“ ed importunity which Mr. S. does, to per-
“ suade them to be pertinent. But these testi-
“ monies which I have nakedly set down, leav-
“ ing them to speak for themselves, are enough
“ to satisfy an unpassionate reader, such an one as
“ dares trust himself with the use of own eyes and
“ reason. As for that sort of men which choose
“ to follow noise rather than light, we must be
“ content to leave them to the blind conduct of
“ those guides, who having no better means to
“ keep their followers to them, go hallowing in
“ the dark, and fill their ears with the insignifi-
“ cant sounds of infallibility, indefectibility, self-
“ evidence and demonstration.”
“ Concerning the appendix wherein you are par-
“ ticularly challeng’d, I hope for an account very
“ shortly, and so take leave.”

Sir,

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

OF
SINCERITY *and* CONSTANCY
IN THE
Faith and Profession
OF THE
TRUE RELIGION.

OF
SINCERITY AND COEXISTENCE
IN THE
FAITH AND PROFESSION
OF THE
TRUE RELIGION.

TO HIS
SACRED MAJESTY,
KING *WILLIAM*,

THESE
SERMONS

ARE

Most humbly Dedicated,

By the Author's Relict,

Elizabeth Tillotson.

VOL. IV.

7 R

THE

7.

TO THE
HONORABLE
MEMBERS OF THE
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

OF THE
PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

IN RESPONSE TO A
RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE COUNCIL

ON THE 14TH DAY OF MARCH 1892

BY THE HONORABLE
MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

PRINTED BY THE
GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO

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THE
P U B L I S H E R
TO THE
R E A D E R.

THE AUTHOR of these sermons was so well known, particularly for his most excellent and useful discourses from the pulpit, that I shall not attempt, by any thing I can say, to recommend them to the publick. I know very well, they have already that credit in the world, which will render any apology needless; especially when, by this publication of them, they shall speak for themselves.

I think it requisite, only to assure the reader, that they are what they

The P R E F A C E.

pretend to be, the genuine works of that great man.

Whilst I had the happiness of conversing with him, he was pleas'd (at my request) to instruct me in the character in which he wrote all his sermons: and some of these now published, having been transcribed by me some years since, were found amongst his papers, corrected with his own hand.

By what he had been pleas'd to say, that I was master of his character, and by the few errata he observ'd in my first performance, I was encouraged to set about this work; in which I can solemnly profess, that I have observ'd a religious care and strictness, neither to omit nor add any thing, but an of, a the, or the like, when the sense plainly required it; and of that too I have given notice, by affixing this mark [“] upon the word which
I did

The P R E F A C E.

I did not find in the original; so that the reader is left to judge of the fitness of such additions; which, after all, are so very few and inconsiderable, as scarcely to deserve this notice; only that he might be satisfied (in case the printer do his part) that he hath here, what he expects, a perfect transcript of these sermons; and in them a true and lively strain of christian piety and eloquence, so fitted to all capacities, that I cannot but hope, all that shall read them will be the better for them, even those not excepted (if there be any such) who may have entertain'd any unreasonable prejudices against them, or their most reverend author.

I have always thought, and often said it, that if any were leaven'd with prejudice against him, they were, to be sure, such as did not know him; and
the

The P R E F A C E.

the farther I go in his writings, the more I am assur'd, that it must be so. But because the sermons themselves, to which I refer, are not yet all of them published, I must leave this to the judgment of the impartial reader, when the whole shall be finish'd, which is design'd with all convenient speed.

Lambeth,
April 2, 1695.

Ra. Barker.

S E R-

S E R M O N LV.

Of sincerity towards GOD and man.

J O H N i. 47.

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him,
behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.*

WHO this Nathanael was, upon whom our SERM.
LV.
SAVIOUR bestows this extraordinary character, doth not certainly appear, his Preach'd
at King-
ston, July
29, 1694.
the last his
grace
preach'd.
name being but once more mentioned in the whole history of the gospel: for certain, he was a good man, who deserved this extraordinary commendation; and none but our SAVIOUR, "who knew what
"was in man, and needed not that any should tell
"him," could have given it, especially of one whom he had never seen before that time; for when "JESUS saw him coming to him, he saith of him,
"behold an Israelite indeed."

The whole nation of the Jews were Israelites by natural descent, being the seed of Jacob or Israel; but in a special and more excellent sense, none are esteem'd the true posterity of Israel, but those who resembled this father of their nation, in true piety and goodness; for (as the apostle reasons) "they
"are not all Israel, who are of Israel;" they only are Israelites indeed who resemble good old Jacob in the sincerity of his piety, and the simplicity of his temper and disposition; for our SAVIOUR
seems

SERM.
LV.

seems here to allude to that character which is given of Jacob (Gen. xxv. 27.) "That he was a plain man, or, as the hebrew word signifies, a perfect and sincere man," in opposition to his brother Esau who is said to be cunning, so that to be an Israelite indeed, is to be a downright honest man, without fraud and guile, without any arts of hypocrisy and deceit.

In speaking of this virtue of sincerity, which is the highest character and commendation of a good man, I shall consider it, as it respects God and man. As it respects God, so it imports the truth and sincerity of our piety and devotion towards him. As it regards men, so it signifies a simplicity of mind and manners, in our carriage and conversation, one towards another: both these are included, and very probably were intended, in the character which our SAVIOUR here gives Nathanael.

I. I shall consider this grace, or virtue of sincerity, as it respects God, and so it imports the truth and sincerity of our piety towards him, that we heartily believe, and fear, and honour him, and that the outward expressions of our piety and obedience to him are the genuine issue of our inward apprehensions of him, and affections towards him; and this no doubt, our SAVIOUR intended, in the first place, in the character of this good man, that he was a man of a real and substantial and unaffected piety, and in truth, what he appeared to be; that he did sincerely love God and his truth, and was ready to embrace it, whenever it was fairly proposed to him, as did plainly appear in his carriage towards our SAVIOUR; for when Philip invited him "to come
" and

“ and see him,” he did not conceal the prejudice and objection he had against him, grounded upon a common, but uncharitable proverb, “ that out of Nazareth ariseth no prophet; ” but having an honest and sincere mind, he was not so carried away by a popular prejudice, as not to have patience to be better inform’d, and therefore was easily persuaded to go and see our SAVIOUR, and to discourse with him himself, and being satisfied that he was the MESSIAS, he presently owns him for such, calling him “ the SON of GOD, and the king of Israel. ” And because sincerity is the very heart and substance of religion, it concerns us not only to endeavour after this temper and disposition, but to enquire into the nature and properties of it, that we may know when we have it, and may have the comfort of it. I shall mention five or six properties of a sincere piety, by which men may sufficiently know the integrity of their hearts towards God.

i. Our piety is then sincere, when the chief reasons and predominant motives of it are religious; and I call that a religious or rational motive, which regards God and another world, in opposition to men, and to our present temporal advantages; when the principal and swaying motives of our piety, are a sense of God’s authority over us, and of our duty and obligation to him; a fear of his displeasure and threatnings, and the hopes of the glorious reward which he hath promised to obedience; these motives are properly religious, because they respect God, and are the arguments to obedience, which he himself offers to us, to persuade us

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LV.

to our duty ; and that is a sincere piety, which is wrought in us by these considerations, how unequally soever mixed, for even in the most of men, fear does many times prevail more than love, and, in case of great temptation, may preserve men from sin, when perhaps no other consideration will do it. On the contrary, that is an unsincere piety, to which we are moved meerly by the regard of men, and the consideration of some temporal advantages. And when these have the chief influence upon us, it is easy for any man to discern in himself ; for he that will carefully observe himself, can hardly be ignorant of the true spring and motive of his own actions : but there is one sign whereby a man may certainly know that his heart is not right towards God, and that is, if when these motives are absent, our piety and zeal for the true religion doth either cease, or is sensibly cooled and abated ; as if impiety, or popery, or any thing else that is bad, begin to be in fashion, and to have the countenance of great examples ; if those whom we fear, and upon whom we depend, do discover any inclination that way ; if the garb of religion cease to be for our interest, or, in the revolution of things, happen to be contrary to it : if in any of these cases, we let fall the profession of our religion, or neglect the practice of it, this is a plain and undeniable demonstration of the insincerity of our former piety.

2. A sincere piety must be rooted in the heart, and be a living principle within us : for as the apostle reasons in another case, “ he is not a Jew who is
“ one outwardly, but he who is one inwardly, and

“ in

“ in the heart ;” and without this all outward acts
“ of piety and devotion are hypocrisy ; a picture of
“ religion, and a form of godliness, without the life
“ and power of it.”

SERM.

LV.

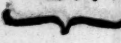
3. A third evidence of a sincere piety is, when men are religious in private and in secret, as well as in publick and in the open view of men. He is truly devout, who is so in his family, and in his closet, where he hath no witness, but God, and his own soul, as well as in the church. He is a downright honest man, who will make good his word, and perform his promise, when no proof can be made of it, and no law compel him to it, as readily as if there had been an hundred witnesses of it. He is sincerely just, who will not detain from another his right, though he be ignorant of it ; nor wrong any man, though he could do it with all the secrecy and safety in the world ; who will not impose upon another's ignorance or unskilfulness, though never so much to his own benefit or advantage : he is truly charitable, who would not only as soon, but rather sooner give his alms in secret, than in the sight of men : and he is truly grateful, who when there is occasion and opportunity, will acknowledge a kindness and requite a benefit to the relations of his deceased friend, though he be sure that all memory of the obligation died with him, and that none are conscious of it, but God and his own conscience. And indeed there is scarce any act of piety and virtue, the sincerity of which may not by this evidence be known by us : as on the contrary a man may for certain conclude himself a hypocrite, if he be not the same in the presence of
7 S 2 God,

God, and his own conscience, that he is in the sight of men.

4. Another evidence of a sincere piety is a constant tenour of goodness in the general course of our lives. I do not now speak of the first beginnings of piety, in new converts, which are many times very imperfect, and such as afford little or no evidence of a man's sincerity; but in those who have made any considerable progress in goodness; the habits of any known sin, and the wilful and deliberate neglect of our duties, and even the single acts of more heinous crimes, will bring in question our sincerity, and are by no means to be shelter'd under the name of infirmity: for these the grace of God, if we be not wanting to ourselves, will enable us to subdue; and he is not sincerely good, who doth not seriously endeavour to be as good as he can, and does not make use of that grace which God is ready to afford to all the purposes, tho' not of a perfect, yet of a sincere obedience to the laws of God.

5. Another evidence of a sincere piety is, that our obedience to God be uniform and universal, equally respecting all the laws of God, and every part of our duty; that it do not content itself with an especial regard to some precepts of the law tho' never so considerable, and allow itself in the breach, or neglect of the rest; no nor with observing the duties of one table of the law, if it overlook the other; no nor with obedience to all the commandments of God, one only excepted. St. James puts this case, and determines, "that he that keeps the whole law, saying that he offends in one point, is guilty of all," that is, is not sincere in his obedience

dience to the rest. And therefore we must take great heed that we do not set the commandments of God at odds, and dash the two tables of the law against one another, lest, as St. James says, "we break the whole law." And yet I fear this is too common a fault, even amongst those who make a great profession of piety, that they are not sufficiently sensible of the obligation and necessity of the duties of the second table, and of the excellency of those graces and virtues, which respect our carriage and conversation with one another. Men do not seem to consider, that God did not give laws to us, for his own sake, but ours; and therefore that he did not only design that we should honour him, but that we should be happy in one another; for which reason he joins with our humble and dutiful deportment towards himself, the offices of justice and charity towards others, Micah vi. 8, "he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And 1 John iv. 21. "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." And yet it is too visible that many, who make a great profession of piety towards God, are very defective in moral duties; very unpeaceable, and turbulent in their spirits, very peevish and passionate, very conceited and censorious, as if their profession of godliness did exempt them from the care and practice of christian virtues. But we must not so fix our eye upon heaven, as to forget that we walk upon the earth, and to neglect the ordering of our steps
and

SERM. and conversation among men, lest while we are
 LV.  gazing upon the stars, we fall into the ditch of gross
 and foul immorality.

It is very possible, that men may be devout and zealous in religion, very nice and scrupulous about the worship and service of God; and yet because of their palpable defect in points of justice and honesty, of meekness and humility, of peace and charity, may be gross and odious hypocrites. For men must not think for some acts, either of outward or inward piety, to compound with God for the neglect of mercy and judgment, or to demand it as a right from men to be excused from the great duties and virtues of humane conversation; or pretend to be above them, because they relate chiefly to this world, and to the temporal happiness of men; as if it were the privilege of great devotion, to give a licence to men to be peevish and froward, sour and morose, supercilious and censorious in their behaviour towards others. Men must have a great care that they be not intent upon the outward parts of religion, to the prejudice of inward and real goodness, and that they do not so use the means of religion, as to neglect and lose the main end of it: that they do not place all religion in fasting and outward mortification: for though these things be very useful and necessary in their place, if they be discreetly managed, and made subservient to the great ends of religion; yet it is often seen that men have so unequal a respect to the several parts of their duty, that fasting and corporal severity, those meager and lean duties of piety, in comparison, do like Pharaoh's lean kine, "devour and eat up almost
 " all

“all the goodly and well-favoured,” the great and substantial duties of the christian life; and therefore men must take great heed, lest whilst they are so intent upon mortifying themselves, they do not mortify virtue and good-nature, humility and meekness and charity, things highly valuable in themselves, and amiable in the eyes of men, and in the sight of God of great price.

For the neglect of the moral duties of the second table is not only a mighty scandal to religion, but of pernicious consequence many other ways. A fierce and ill-governed, an ignorant and injudicious zeal for the honour of God, and something or other belonging necessarily, as they think, to his true worship and service, hath made many men do many unreasonable, immoral and impious things, of which history will furnish us with innumerable instances, in the practice of the jesuits and other zealots of the church of Rome; and there are not wanting too many examples of this kind amongst ourselves: for men that are not sober, and considerate in their religion, but give themselves up to the conduct of blind prejudice, and furious zeal, do easily persuade themselves that any thing is lawful, which they strongly fancy to tend to the honour of God, and to the advancement of the cause of religion. Hence some have proceeded to that height of absurdity, in their zeal for their religion and church, as to think it not only lawful but highly commendable and meritorious to equivocate upon oaths and break faith with hereticks, and to destroy all those that differ from them; as if it were piety in some cases to lie for the truth, and to kill men for God's sake.

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So that if we would approve the integrity of our hearts to God, and evidence to ourselves the sincerity of our obedience, we ought impartially to regard all the laws of God, and every part of our duty: and if we do not, our heart is not upright with God. 'Tis observable that sincerity in scripture is often called by the name of integrity, and perfection, because it is integrated and made up of all the parts of our duty.

6. The last evidence I shall mention of the sincerity of our religion is, if it hold out against persecution, and endure the fiery trial. This is the utmost proof of our integrity, when we are called to bear the cross, to be willing then to expose all our worldly interest, and even life itself, for the cause of God and religion. This is a trial which God doth not always call his faithful servants to; but they are always to be prepared for it, in the purpose and resolution of their minds. This our SAVIOUR makes the great mark of a true disciple, "if any man (saith he) will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This is a certain sign, "that men have received the word into good ground," and are well-rooted in their religion, when they are not shaken by these fierce assaults; "for many (as our SAVIOUR tells us) hear the word, and with joy receive it; but having not root in themselves, they endure but for a while, and when persecution or tribulation ariseth, because of the word, presently they are offended;" nay some, when they see persecution coming at a distance, wheel off and bethink themselves of making their retreat in

in time, and " of agreeing with their adversary, **SERM.**
" whilst he is yet in the way." **LV.**

So that constancy to our religion in case of danger, and suffering for it, is the best proof of our sincerity. This is the fiery trial, as the scripture calls it, which will try what materials we are made of, and whether we love God and his truth in sincerity.

And thus I have considered sincerity as it respects God, and imports true piety and religion towards him ; and I proceed to the second consideration,

II. Of sincerity as it regards men ; and so it signifies a simplicity of mind and manners in our conversation, and carriage one towards another ; singleness of heart, discovering itself in a constant plainness and honest openness of behaviour, free from all insidious devices, and little tricks, and fetches of craft and cunning ; from all false appearances and deceitful disguises of ourselves in word or action ; or yet more plainly, it is to speak as we think, and do what we pretend and profess, to perform and make good what we promise, and, in a word, really to be, what we would seem and appear to be.

Not that we are obliged to tell every man all our mind ; but we are never to declare any thing contrary to it : we may be silent, and conceal as much of ourselves, as prudence, or any other good reason requires ; but we must not put on a disguise, and make a false appearance and empty shew of what we are not, either by word or action. Contrary to this virtue is (I fear) most of that

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which is current in conversation, and which for the most part is nothing but words, to fill up the gaps, and supply the emptiness of discourse; and a pretence to that kindness and esteem for persons, which either in truth we have not, or not to that degree which our expressions seem to import; which if done with design, is that which we call flattery, a very odious sort of insincerity, and so much the worse, because it abuses men into a vain and foolish opinion of themselves, and an ill-grounded confidence of the kindness and good-will of others towards them; and so much the more dangerous, because it hath a party within us, which is ready to let it in; it plays upon our self-love, which greedily catcheth at any thing that tends to magnify and advance us; for God knows, we are all too apt to think and make the best of our bad selves, so that very few tempers have wisdom and firmness enough to be proof against flattery; it requires great consideration and a resolute modesty and humility, to resist the insinuations of this serpent; yea, a little rudeness and moroseness of nature, a prudent distrust and infidelity in mankind, to make a man in good earnest to reject and despise it.

Now besides, that all hypocrisy and insincerity is mean in itself, having falshood at the bottom; it is also often made use of, to the prejudice of others, in their rights and interests. For not only dissimulation is contrary to sincerity, because it consists in a vain shew of what we are not, in a false muster of our virtues and good qualities, in a deceitful representation and undue character of our lives: but there are likewise other qualities and actions more in-

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consistent with integrity, which are of a more injurious and mischievous consequence to our nature, as falshood and fraud, and perfidiousness, and infinite little crafts and arts of deceit, which men practise upon one another in their ordinary conversation and intercourse. The former is great vanity: but this is gross iniquity.

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And yet these qualities dexterously managed, so as not to lie too plain and open to discovery, are look'd upon by many, as signs of great depth and shrewdness, admirable instruments of business, and necessary means for the compassing our own ends and designs; and tho' in those that have suffered by them, and felt the mischief of them, they are always accounted dishonest, yet among the generality of lookers on, they pass for great policy; as if the very skill of governing and managing humane affairs, did consist in these little tricks and devices: but he that looks more narrowly into them, and will but have the patience to observe the end of them, will find them to be great follies, and that it is only for want of true wisdom and understanding, that men turn aside to tricks, and make dissimulation and lies their refuge. It is Solomon's observation, "that he that walketh up-
"rightly, walketh surely; but the folly of fools is
"deceit." The folly of fools, that is, the most egregious piece of folly that any man can be guilty of, is to play the knave: the vulgar translation renders this clause a little otherwise, but yet towards the same sense, *sed stultus divertit ad dolos*, "but the fool
"turns aside to tricks;" to make use of these, is a sign the man wants understanding to see the plain and direct way to his end. I will not deny but these

SER M. little arts may serve a present turn, and perhaps successfully enough; but true wisdom goes deep, and reacheth a great way farther, looking to the end of things, and regarding the future as well as the present, and, by judging upon the whole matter and sum of affairs, doth clearly discern, that craft and cunning are only useful for the present occasion; whereas integrity is of a lasting use, and will be serviceable to us upon all occasions, and in the whole course of our lives; and that dissimulation and deceit, tho' they may do some present execution in business, yet they recoil upon a man terribly afterwards, so as to make him stagger, and by degrees to weaken, and at last to destroy his reputation, which is a much more useful and substantial and lasting instrument of prosperity and success in humane affairs than any tricks and devices whatsoever. Thus have I considered this great virtue of sincerity, both as it regards God, and the mutual conversation and intercourse of men one with another.

And now having explained the nature of sincerity to God and man, by declaring the properties of it, and in what instances we ought chiefly to practise it, and what things are contrary to it; that which remains, is to persuade men to endeavour after this excellent quality, and to practise it in all the words and actions of their lives.

Let us then, in the first place, be sincere in our religion, and serve God in truth and uprightness of heart, out of conscience of our duty and obligations to him, and not with sinister respects to our private interest or passion, to the publick approbation or censure of men. Let us never make use of religion

gion to serve any base and unworthy ends, cloking our designs of covetousness, or ambition, or revenge, with pretences of conscience and zeal for God; and let us endeavour after the reality of religion, always remembering that a sincere piety doth not consist in shew, but substance, not in appearance, but in effect; that the spirit of true religion is still and calm, charitable and peaceable, making as little shew and stir as is possible; that a truly and sincerely good Man does not affect vain ostentation, and an unseasonable discovery of his good qualities, but endeavours rather really to be, than to seem religious, and of the two rather seeks to conceal his piety, than to set it out with pomp; gives his alms privately; prays to God in secret, and makes no appearance of religion, but in such fruits and effects as cannot be hid in the quiet and silent virtues of humility, and meekness, and patience, of peace and charity, in governing his passions, and taking heed not to offend with his tongue, by slander and calumny, by envious detraction or rash censure, or by any word or action that may be to the hurt and prejudice of his neighbour: but, on the contrary, it is a very ill sign, if a man affect to make a great noise and bustle about religion; if he blow a trumpet before his good works, and by extraordinary shews of devotion summon the eyes of men to behold him, and do, as it were, call aloud to them to take notice of his piety, "and to come and see his zeal for the LORD of hosts." It is not impossible but such a man, with all his vanity and ostentation, may have some real goodness in him; but he is as the hypocrites are, and does as like one

SERM. one as is possible; and by the mighty shew that he
 LV. makes, to wise and considerate men, greatly brings
 in question the sincerity of his religion.

And with the sincerity of our piety towards God, let us join the simplicity and integrity of manners in our conversation with men. Let us strictly charge our selves to use truth and plainness in all our words and doings; let our tongue be ever the true interpreter of our mind, and our expressions the lively image of our thoughts and affections, and our outward actions exactly agreeable to our inward purposes and intentions.

Amongst too many other instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of the age wherein we live, the great and general want of sincerity in conversation is none of the least. The world is grown so full of dissimulation and compliment, that mens words are hardly any signification of their thoughts; and if any man measure his words by his heart, and speak as he thinks, and do not express more kindness to every man, than men usually have for any man, he can hardly escape the censure of rudeness and want of breeding. The old english plainness and sincerity, that generous integrity of nature and honesty of disposition, which always argues true greatness of mind, and is usually accompanied with undaunted courage and resolution, is in a great measure lost among us; there hath been a long endeavour to transfrom us into foreign manners and fashions, and to bring us to a servile imitation of none of the best of our neighbours, in some of the worst of their qualities. The dialect of conversation is now-a-days so swell'd with vanity and compli-

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ment, and so forfeited (as I may say) with expressions of kindness and respect, that if a man that lived an age or two ago should return into the world again, he would really want a dictionary to help him to understand his own language, and to know the true intrinsic value of the phrase in fashion, and would hardly at first believe at what a low rate the highest strains and expressions of kindness imaginable do commonly pass in current payment; and when he should come to understand it, it would be a great while before he could bring himself, with a good countenance and a good conscience, to converse with men upon equal terms, and in their own way.

And, in truth, it is hard to say, whether it should more provoke our contempt or our pity, to hear what solemn expressions of respect and kindness will pass between men, almost upon no occasion; how great honour and esteem they will declare for one whom perhaps they never heard of or saw before, and how entirely they are all on the sudden devoted to his service and interest, for no reason; how infinitely and eternally obliged to him for no benefit, and how extremely they will be concerned for him, yea, and afflicted too, for no cause. I know it is said, in justification of this hollow kind of conversation, that there is no harm, no real deceit in compliment, but the matter is well enough, so long as we understand one another; *Et verba valent ut nummi*, "words are like money," and when the current value of them is generally understood, no man is cheated by them. This is something, if such words were any thing; but being brought into the account, they are meer cyphers. However, it is

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is still a just matter of complaint, that sincerity and plainness are out of fashion, and that our language is running into a lye, that men have almost quite perverted the use of speech, and made words to signify nothing; that the greatest part of the conversation of mankind, and of their intercourse with one another, is little else but driving a trade of dissimulation; insomuch that it would make a man heartily sick and weary of the world, to see the little sincerity that is in use and practice among men, and tempt him to break out into that melancholy complaint and wish of the prophet, Jer. ix. “O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they are all adulterers, and an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies, but have no courage for the truth upon earth. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit; one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour, but in his heart he lieth in wait. Shall not I visit for these things, saith the LORD? and shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as this?”

Such were the manners of the people of Israel at that time, which were both the forerunner and the cause of those terrible calamities which befell them afterwards; and this character agrees but too well to the present age, which is so wretchedly void of truth and sincerity; for which reason there is the greater

greater need to recommend this virtue to us, which seems to be fled from us, “that truth and righteousness may return, and glory may dwell in our land, and God may shew his mercy upon us, and grant us his salvation, and righteousness and peace may kiss each other.” To this end give me leave to offer these following considerations.

First, that sincerity is the highest commendation, and the very best character, that can be given of any man; it is the solid foundation of all virtue, the heart and soul of all piety and goodness; it is in scripture called perfection, and frequently joined with it; and throughout the bible, there is the greatest stress and weight laid upon it; it is spoken of as the sum and comprehension of all religion. “Only fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and truth,” says Joshua to the people of Israel, Jos. xxiv. 14. God takes great pleasure in it; so David assures us, 1 Chr. xxix. 17. “I know, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness:” and again, “thou lovest truth in the inward parts.”

To this disposition of mind the promises of divine favour and blessing are particularly made, Psal. xv. 1, 2. “LORD, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? he that walketh up-rightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth from his heart.” Psal. xxxii. 2. “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

And 'tis observable that this character of our SAVIOUR here given of Nathanael, is the only full and perfect commendation that we read was ever given by him of any particular person. He commends

SERM. some particular acts of piety and virtue in others, as
 LV. St. Peter's confession of him, the faith of the centurion, and of the woman that was healed by touching the hem of his garment, the charity of the woman that cast her two mites into the treasury, and the bounty of that other devout woman who poured upon him a box of precious ointment: but here he gives the particular character of a good man, when he says of Nathanael, that he was "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile." And the apostle mentions this quality, as the chief ingredient into the character of the best man that ever was, our blessed SAVIOUR, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

Secondly, the rarity of this virtue is a farther commendation of it. A sincerely pious and good man, without any guile or disguise, is not a sight to be seen every day. Our SAVIOUR in the text speaks of it, as a thing very extraordinary and of a special remark and observation, and breaks out into some kind of wonder upon the occasion, as if to see a man of perfect integrity and simplicity were an occurrence very rare and unusual, and such as calls for our more especial attention and regard, "Behold (saith he) an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

Thirdly, the want of sincerity will quite spoil the virtue and acceptance of all our piety and obedience, and certainly deprive us of the reward of it. All that we do in the service of GOD, all our external obedience to his laws, if not animated by sincerity, is like a sacrifice without a heart, which is an abomination to the LORD.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, hypocrisy and insincerity is a very vain and foolish thing ; it is designed to cheat others, but is in truth a deceiving of ourselves. No man would flatter or dissemble, did he believe he were seen and discovered ; an open knave is a great fool, who destroys at once both his design and reputation : and this is the case of every hypocrite ; all the disagreement which is between his tongue and his thoughts, his actions and his heart, is open to that eye, from which nothing can be hid ; “ for the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he seeth all his goings ; there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.”

Fifthly, truth and reality have all the advantages of appearance, and many more. If the shew of any thing be good for any thing, I am sure sincerity is better ; for why does any man dissemble, or seem to be that which he is not, but because he thinks it good to have such a quality as he pretends to ? for to counterfeit and dissemble, is to put on the appearance of some real excellency. Now the best way in the world for a man to seem to be any thing, is really to be what he would seem to be. Besides, that it is many times as troublesome to make good the pretence of a good quality, as to have it ; and if a man have it not, it is ten to one, but he is discovered to want it, and then all his pains and labour to seem to have it is lost. There is something unnatural in painting, which a skilful eye will easily discern from native beauty and complexion.

It is hard to personate and act a part long ; for where truth is not at the bottom, nature will always

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be endeavouring to return, and will peep out and betray herself one time or other. Therefore if any man think it convenient to seem good, let him be so indeed, and then his goodness will appear to every body's satisfaction; for truth is convincing, and carries its own light and evidence along with it, and will not only commend us to every man's conscience, but which is much more, to GOD, who searcheth and seeth our hearts; so that upon all accounts sincerity is true wisdom. Particularly as to the affairs of this world, integrity hath many advantages over all the fine and artificial ways of dissimulation and deceit; it is much the plainer and easier, much the safer and more secure way of dealing in the world; it hath less of trouble and difficulty, of entanglement and perplexity, of danger and hazard in it; it is the shortest and nearest way to our end, carrying us thither in a straight line, and will hold out and last longest. The arts of deceit and cunning do continually grow weaker and less effectual and serviceable to them that use them; whereas integrity gains strength by use, and the more and longer any man practiseth it, the greater service it does him, by confirming his reputation, and encouraging those with whom he hath to do, to repose the greater trust and confidence in him, which is an unspeakable advantage in the business and affairs of life.

But a dissembler must always be upon his guard, and watch himself carefully, that he do not contradict his own pretence; for he acts an unnatural part, and therefore must put a continual force and restraint upon himself. Truth always lies uppermost, and if a man do not carefully attend, he will be apt to bolt

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it out : whereas he that acts sincerely, hath the easiest task in the world ; because he follows nature, and so is put to no trouble and care about his words and actions ; he needs not invent any pretences beforehand, nor make excuses afterwards, for any thing he hath said or done.

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But insincerity is very troublesome to manage ; a man hath so many things to attend to, so many ends to bring together, as make his life a very perplexed and intricate thing. *Oportet mendacem esse memorem*, “ a liar had need of a good memory,” lest he contradict at one time what he said at another : but truth is always consistent with itself, and needs nothing to help it out ; it is always near at hand, and sits upon our lips, and is ready to drop out before we are aware ; whereas a lye is troublesome, and sets a man’s invention upon the rack, and one trick needs a great many more to make it good. It is like building upon a false foundation, which continually stands in need of props to shore it up, and proves at last more chargeable than to have raised a substantial building at first upon a true and solid foundation ; for sincerity is firm and substantial ; and there is nothing hollow and unsound in it, and because it is plain and open, fears no discovery, of which the crafty man is always in danger, and when he thinks he walks in the dark, all his pretences are so transparent, that he that runs may read them : he is the last man that finds himself to be found out, and whilst he takes it for granted that he makes fools of others, he renders himself ridiculous.

Add

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Add to all this, that sincerity is the most compendious wisdom, and an excellent instrument for the speedy dispatch of business; it creates confidence in those we have to deal with, saves the labour of many enquiries, and brings things to an issue in few words: it is like travelling in a plain beaten road, which commonly brings a man sooner to his journey's end, than by-ways, in which men often lose themselves. In a word, whatsoever convenience may be thought to be in falshood and dissimulation, it is soon over; but the inconvenience of it is perpetual, because it brings a man under an everlasting jealousy and suspicion, so that he is not believed when he speaks truth, nor trusted, when perhaps he means honestly: when a man hath once forfeited the reputation of his integrity, he is set fast, and nothing will then serve his turn, neither truth nor falshood.

And I have often thought, that God hath in great wisdom hid from men of false and dishonest minds the wonderful advantages of truth and integrity to the prosperity even of our worldly affairs; these men are so blinded by their covetousness and ambition, that they cannot look beyond a present advantage; nor forbear to seize upon it, tho' by ways never so indirect; they cannot see so far, as to the remote consequences of a steady integrity, and the vast benefit and advantages which it will bring a man at last. Were but this sort of men wise and clear-sighted enough to discern this, they would be honest, out of very knavery, not out of any love to honesty or virtue, but with a crafty design to promote and advance more effectually their own interests; and therefore the justice of the divine providence hath hid

hid this truest point of wisdom from their eyes, that bad men might not be upon equal terms with the just and upright, and serve their own wicked designs by honest and lawful means.

Indeed, if a man were only to deal in the world for a day, and should never have occasion to converse more with mankind, never more need their good opinion, or good word, it were then no great matter (speaking as to the concerns of the world) if a man spent his reputation all at once, and ventured it at one throw: but if he be to continue in the world, and would have the advantage of conversation whilst he is in it, let him make use of truth and sincerity in all his words and actions, for nothing but this will last and hold out to the end; all other arts will fail, but truth and integrity will carry a man through, and bear him out to the last.

'Tis the observation of Solomon, Prov. xii. 19. "The lip of truth is established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment." And the wiser any man is, the more clearly will he discern, how serviceable sincerity is to all the great ends and purposes of humane life; and that man hath made a good progress, and profited much in the school of wisdom, who valueth truth and sincerity according to their worth. Every man will readily grant them to be great virtues, and arguments of a generous mind, but that there is so much of true wisdom in them, and that they really serve to profit our interest in this world, seems a great paradox to the generality of men; and yet I doubt not but it is undoubtedly true, and generally found to be so, in the experience of mankind.

Lastly,

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Lastly, Consider that it is not worth our while to dissemble, considering the shortness and especially the uncertainty of our lives. To what purpose should we be so cunning, when our abode in this world is so short and uncertain? why should any man by dissembling his judgment, or acting contrary to it, incur at once the displeasure of GOD, and the discontent of his own mind? especially if we consider, that all our dissimulation shall one day be made manifest and published on the open theatre of the world, before GOD, angels, and men, to our everlasting shame and confusion; all disguise and vizards shall then be pluckt off, and every man shall appear in his true colours. “For then the secrets of men shall be judged, and GOD will bring every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Nothing is now covered, which shall not then be revealed, nor hid which shall not then be known.”

Let us then be now what we would be glad to be found in that day, when all pretences shall be examined, and the closest hypocrisy of men shall be laid open and dashed out of countenance; when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, and all the hidden works of darkness shall be revealed, and all our thoughts, words, and actions shall be brought to a strict and severe trial, and be censured, by that impartial and infallible judgment of GOD, which is according to truth; “in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by JESUS CHRIST.”

To whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be glory now and for ever. Amen.

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S E R M O N LVI.

The excellency of Abraham's faith and
obedience.

H E B R E W S xi. 17, 18, 19.

*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac:
and he that had received the promises offered up his
only begotten son: of whom it was said, that in
Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God
was able to raise him up, even from the dead;
from whence also he received him in a figure.*

THE design of this epistle to the Hebrews is S E R M.
to recommend to them the christian religion, LVI.
to which they were but newly converted, Preached
and to encourage them to constancy in the profes- at White-
sion of it, notwithstanding the sufferings which at- hall, 1686,
tended it. He sets before them in this chapter se- before the
veral examples in the old testament of those, who, princess
tho' they were under a much more imperfect dispen- Anne.
sation, yet by a stedfast belief in God and his pro-
mises, had performed such wonderful acts of obedi-
ence and self-denial.

He begins with the patriarchs before the flood;
but insists chiefly upon the examples of two eminent
persons of their own nation, as nearest to them, and
most likely to prevail upon them, the examples of

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7 X

Abraham

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LVI.

Abraham and Moses, the one the father of their nation, the other their great lawgiver, and both of them the greatest patterns of faith, and obedience, and self-denial, that the history of all former ages, from the beginning of the world, had afforded.

I shall at this time, by God's assistance, treat of the first of these, the example of Abraham, the constancy of whose faith, and the chearfulness of whose obedience, even in the difficultest cases, is so remarkable above all the other examples mentioned in this chapter. For, "at the command of God he left his kindred and his country, not knowing whither he should go;" by which eminent act of obedience he declared himself to be wholly at God's disposal, and ready to follow him: but this was no trial in comparison of that here in my text, when God commanded him "to offer up his only son:" but such was the immutable steadfastness of his faith, and the perfect submission of his obedience, that it does not appear that he made the least check at it; but out of perfect reverence and obedience to the authority of the divine command, he went about it as readily and chearfully as if God had bid him do some small thing: "by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."

For the explication of which words, it will be requisite to consider two things.

First, the trial or temptation in general.

Secondly, the excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon his trial.

First, the trial or temptation in general: it is said "that Abraham when he was tried, the word is

"πειρα"

“περαζόμεν⁶, being tempted:” that is, God intend-⁸ E R M.
ing to make trial of his faith and obedience; and LVI.
so it is exprest, Gen. xxii. 1. where it is said, “that
“ God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him,
“ take now thy son, thine only son.”

Now there are two difficulties concerning this mat-
ter. It seems contrary to scripture, that God should
tempt any man; and contrary to reason; because
God, who knows what every man will do, need-
ed not to make trial of any man's faith and obe-
dience.

First, it seems contrary to scripture; which says,
“ God tempts no man:” and 'tis most true, that
God tempts no man, with a design to draw him in-
to sin; but this doth not hinder, but he may try
their faith and obedience with great difficulties, to
make them the more illustrious. Thus God tempted
Abraham; and he permitted Job, and even our
blessed SAVIOUR himself to be thus tempted.

Secondly, it seems contrary to reason, that God,
who knows what any man will do in any circum-
stances, should go to make trial of it. But God
does not try men for his own information; but to
give an illustrious proof and example to others of
faith and obedience: and tho' after this trial of
Abraham, God says to him, “ now I know that
“ thou lovest me, because thou hast not withheld
“ thy son, thine only son from me;” yet we
are to understand this as spoken after the manner
of men; as God elsewhere speaks to Abraham con-
cerning Sodom; “ I will go down now to see
“ whether they have done altogether according to

SERM. "the cry which is come up unto me; and if not,
LVI. "I will know."

I proceed to the second thing I proposed, the excellency of Abraham's faith and obedience upon this trial: "By faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac." God accepts of it, as if he had done it; because he had done it in part, and was ready to have performed the rest, if God had not countermanded him.

And this act of faith and obedience in Abraham will appear the more illustrious, if we consider these three things.

I. The firmness and steadfastness of his faith, notwithstanding the objections against it.

II. The constancy of his resolution, notwithstanding the difficulty of the thing.

III. The reasonableness of his faith, in that he gave satisfaction to himself in so hard and perplexed a case.

I. The firmness and steadfastness of his faith will appear, if we consider what objections there were in the case, enough to shake a very strong faith. There were three great objections against this command, and such as might in reason make a wise and good man doubtful whether this command were from God.

The horrid nature of the thing commanded.

The grievous scandal that might seem almost unavoidably to follow upon it.

And the horrible consequence of it, which seemed to make the former promise of God to Abraham void.

First,

First, the horrid nature of the thing commanded, which was for a father to kill his own child. This must needs appear very barbarous and unnatural, and look liker a sacrifice to an idol, than to the true God.

It seemed to be against the law of nature, and directly contrary to that kindness and affection which God himself had planted in the hearts of parents towards their children.

And there is no affection more natural and strong than this; for there are many persons that would redeem the lives of their children with the hazard of their own. Now that God hath planted such an affection in nature, is an argument that it is good, and therefore it could not but seem strange, that he should command any thing contrary to it: and in this case, there were two circumstances that increased the horror of the fact; that his son was innocent; and that he was to slay him with his own hands.

1. That his son was innocent. It would grieve the heart of any father, to give up his son to death, tho' he were never so undutiful and disobedient.

So passionately was David affected with the death of his son Absalom, as to wish he had died for him, tho' he died in the very act of rebellion, and tho' the saving of his life had been inconsistent with the peace of his government.

How deep then must it sink into the heart of a father, to give up his innocent son to death? and such a son was Isaac, for any thing that appeared to the contrary. God himself gave him this testimony, "that he was the son whom his father loved," and there is no

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no intimation of any thing to the contrary. Now this could not but appear strange to a good man, that God should command an innocent person to be put to death. But,

2. That a father should be commanded, not only to give up his son to death, but to slay him with his own hands; not only to be a spectator, but to be the actor in this tragedy. What father would not shrink, and start back at such a command? what good man especially in such a case, and where nature was so hard prest, would not have been apt to have looked upon such a revelation as this, rather as the suggestion and illusion of an evil spirit, than a command of God? and yet Abraham's faith was not staggered, so as to call this revelation of God in question.

Secondly, the grievous scandal that might seem almost unavoidably to follow upon it, was another great objection against it. The report of such an action would in all appearance blemish the reputation, even of so good a man, amongst all sober and considerate persons, who could hardly forbear to censure him, as a wicked and unnatural man.

And this was a hard case, for a man to be put to sacrifice at once two of the dearest things in the world, his reputation and his son: nor could he have easily defended himself from this imputation, by alledging an express revelation and command of God for it; for who would give credit to it?

A revelation to another man is nothing to me, unless I be assured, that he had such a revelation, which I cannot be, but either by another immediate revelation, or by some miracle to confirm it.

The

The act had an appearance of so much horror, that it was not easily credible that God should command it; and if every man's confident pretence to revelation be admitted, the worst actions may plead this in their excuse. So that this pretence would have been so far from excusing his fault, that it must rather have been esteemed an high aggravation of it, by adding the boldest impiety to the most barbarous inhumanity.

But Abraham was not stumbled at this, nor at the advantage which the enemies of his religion would make of such an occasion, who would be ready to say, "here is your excellent good man, and likely to be a friend of God, who was so cruel an enemy to his own son!" All this, 'tis probable, he might consider: but it did not move him, being resolved to obey God, and to leave it to his wisdom to provide against all the inconveniencies that might follow upon it.

Thirdly, the strongest objection of all was the horrible consequence of the thing, which seemed to clash with former revelations, and to make void the promise which God had before made to Abraham, "that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," which promise was expressly limited to Isaac and his posterity, who had then no son.

And of this difficulty the apostle takes express notice in the text, "that he that had received the promises (that is, was persuaded of the truth and faithfulness of them) offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

And

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And this objection is really so strong, that if Abraham could not have given himself satisfaction about it, he might justly have questioned the truth of the revelation. For no man can possibly entertain two contradictory revelations as from God, but he must of necessity question one or both of them: but so strong was Abraham's faith, as not to be shaken by the seeming contradiction of these two revelations.

II. We will consider the constancy of his resolution to obey God, notwithstanding the harshness and difficulty of the thing. Tho' Abraham were firmly persuaded, that this command to kill his son was really from God; yet it is no easy matter for a man to bring himself to obey God in so difficult a case, and out of meer reverence to the divine authority, to divest himself of his nature, and to thwart the strongest inclinations of it; a man would be very apt to confer with flesh and blood in such a case. Let but any man that knows what it is to be a father, lay his hand upon his heart, and consider his own bowels; and he will be astonished at Abraham's obedience as well as his faith.

"To take his son, his only son, his son whom he loved," and in whom he placed all his hopes of a happy posterity, and with his own hands to destroy him and all his hopes together! it must be a strong faith that will engage a man to obedience in so difficult an instance.

There is one circumstance more especially, which renders Abraham's obedience very remarkable; the deliberateness of the action. It had not been so much, if so soon as he had received this command
from

from God, he had upon a sudden impulse and transport of zeal done this.

But that his obedience might be the more glorious, and have all the circumstances of advantage given to it, God would have it done deliberately, and upon full consideration; and therefore he bad him go to the mountain three days journey from the place where he was, and there to offer up his son.

It is in acts of virtue and obedience, as in acts of sin and vice; the more deliberate the sin is, and the more calm and sedate temper the man is in when he commits it, the greater is the fault; whereas, what is done by surprize, in the heat of temptation or transport of passion, hath some excuse from the suddenness and undeliberateness of it.

So it is in acts of virtue and obedience, especially if they be attended with considerable difficulty, the more deliberately they are done, the more virtuous they are, and the greater praise is due to them.

Now, that Abraham's obedience might want nothing to heighten it, God seems on purpose to have put so long a space betwixt the command and the performance of it; he gives him time to cool upon it, to weigh the command, and to look on every side of this difficult duty; he gives scope for his reason to argue, and debate the case, and opportunity for natural affection to play its part, and for flesh and blood to raise all its batteries against the resolution which he had taken up.

And now we may easily imagine, what conflict this good man had within himself, during those

SERM. three days that he was travelling to the mountain in
 LVI. Moriah; and how his heart was ready to be rent in
 pieces, betwixt his duty to GOD, and his affection
 to his child; so that every step of this unwelcome
 and wearisome journey, he did, as it were, lay vio-
 lent hands upon himself.

He was to offer up his son but once; but he fa-
 crificed himself and his own will every moment
 for three days together; and when he came thither,
 and all things were ready, the altar, the wood, and
 the fire, and the knife, it must needs be a stab-
 bing question, and wound him to the heart, which
 his innocent son so innocently askt him, "where is
 "the lamb for a burnt-offering?"

It must be a strong faith indeed, and a mighty
 resolution, that could make him to hold out three
 days against the violent assaults of his own nature,
 and the charming presence of his son, enough to
 melt his heart, as often as he cast his eyes upon
 him: and yet nothing of all this, made him to
 stagger in his duty, "but being strong in faith, he
 "gave glory to GOD," by one of the most miracu-
 lous acts of obedience that ever was exacted from
 any of the sons of men.

III. In the third and last place, I come to con-
 sider the reasonableness of his faith, in that he was
 able to give satisfaction to himself in so intricate
 and perplext a case. The constancy of Abraham's
 faith, was not an obstinate and stubborn persuasion,
 but the result of the wisest reasoning, and soberest
 consideration.

So the text say, "that he counted, the word is
 "λογισάμενος, he reasoned with himself, that GOD
 "was

“ was able to raise him up from the dead ; ” so SERM.
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that he debated the matter with himself, and gave himself satisfaction, concerning the objections and difficulties in the case ; and being fully satisfied that it was a divine command, he resolved to obey it.

As for the objections I have mentioned :

1. The horrid appearance of the thing, that a father should slay his innocent son. Why should Abraham scruple the doing this, at the command of God, who being the author of life, hath power over it, and may resume what he hath given, and take away the life of any of his creatures when he will, and make whom he pleaseth instruments in the execution of his command ?

It was indeed a hard case, considering natural affection ; and therefore God did not permit it to be executed.

But the question of God's right over the lives of men ; and of his authority to command any man to be the instrument of his pleasure in such a case, admits of no dispute.

And tho' God hath planted strong affections in parents towards their children ; yet he hath written no law in any man's heart to the prejudice of his own sovereign right. This is a case always excepted, and this takes away the objection of injustice.

2. As to the scandal of it, that could be no great objection in those times, when the absolute power of parents over their children was in its full force, and they might put them to death without being accountable for it. So that then it was no such startling matter to hear of a father putting his

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child to death. Nay, in much later times we find that in the most ancient laws of the Romans (I mean those of the xii tables) children are absolutely put in the power of their parents, to whom is given, *jus vitæ & necis*, “ a power of life and “ death over them ; ” and likewise to sell them for slaves.

And tho’ amongst the Jews this paternal power was limited by the law of Moses ; and the judgment of life and death was taken out of the father’s hands, except in case of contumacy and rebellion ; (and even in that case the process was to be before the elders of the city) yet it is certain, that in elder times the paternal power was more absolute and unaccountable, which takes off much from the horror and scandal of the thing, as it appears now to us who have no such power.

And therefore we do not find in the history, that this objection did much stick with Abraham ; it being then no unusual thing for a father to put his child to death upon a just account.

And the command of God, who hath absolute dominion over the lives of his creatures, is certainly a just reason ; and no man can reasonably scruple the doing of that, upon the command of God, which he might have done by his own authority, without being accountable for the action, to any but God only.

3. As to the objection from the horrible consequence of the thing commanded, that the slaying of Isaac seemed to overthrow the promise, which God had made before to Abraham, “ that in Isaac his “ seed should be called : ” This seems to him to be the

the great difficulty, and here he makes use of reason, to reconcile the seeming contradiction of this command of God to his former promise. So the text tells us, "that he offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; reasoning that God was able to raise him up from the dead." So that tho' Isaac were put to death, yet he saw, how the promise of God might still be made good by his being raised from the dead, and living afterwards to have a numerous posterity.

There had then indeed been no instance, or example of any such thing in the world, as the resurrection of one from the dead, which makes Abraham's faith the more wonderful: but he confirmed himself in this belief, by an example as near the case as might be; "he reasoned, that God was able to raise him from the dead, from whence also he had received him in a figure."

This I know is by interpreters generally understood of Isaac's being delivered from the jaws of death, when he was laid upon the altar, and ready to be slain. But the text seems not to speak of what happened after; but of something that had passed before, by which Abraham confirmed himself in this persuasion, that if he were slain, God would raise him up again.

And so the words *ὅθεν ἐκμίστατο* ought to be rendered, in the past time, "from whence also he had received him in a figure." So that this expression plainly refers to the miraculous birth of Isaac, when his parents were past the age of having children; which

SERM. which was little less than a resurrection from the
 LVI. dead.

And so the scripture speaks of it, Rom. iv. 17.
 “ Abraham believed God, who quickeneth the dead,
 “ and calleth the things which are not, as if they
 “ were ; and not being weak in faith, he considered
 “ not his own body which was dead ;” and a little
 before the text, (speaking of the miraculous birth of
 Isaac) “ and therefore sprang there of one, and him
 “ as good as dead, as many as the stars of heaven.”

From whence (as the apostle tells us) Abraham
 reasoned thus ; that God, who gave him Isaac at first
 in so miraculous a manner, was able by another mi-
 racle to restore him to life again, after he was dead,
 and to make him the father of many nations. “ He
 “ reasoned, that God was able to raise him up from
 “ the dead, from whence also he had received him in
 “ a figure.”

Thus you see the reasonableness of Abraham’s
 faith ; he pitched upon the main difficulty in the
 case, and he answered it, as well as was possible : and
 in his reasoning about this matter he gives the utmost
 weight to every thing that might tend to vindicate
 the truth and faithfulness of God’s promise, and to
 make the revelations of God consistent with one
 another ; and this, tho’ he had a great interest and a
 very tender concernment of his own, to have biased
 him.

For he might have argued with great appearance
 and probability the other way : but as every pious
 and good man should do, he reasoned on God’s side,
 and favoured that part. Rather than disobey a com-
 mand

mand of God, or believe that his promise should be frustrate, he will believe any thing that is credible and possible, how improbable soever. Thus far faith will go; but no farther. From the believing of plain contradictions and impossibilities, it always desires to be excused.

Thus much for explication of the words; which I hope hath not been altogether unprofitable, because it tends to clear a point which hath something of difficulty and obscurity in it, and to vindicate the holy scripture, and the divine revelation therein contained, from one of the most specious objections of infidelity.

But I had a farther design in this text; and that is, to make some observations and inferences from it, that may be of use to us. As,

First, that humane nature is capable of clear and full satisfaction, concerning a divine revelation. For if Abraham had not been fully and past all doubt assured, that this was a command from God; he would certainly have spared his son. And nothing is more reasonable, than to believe, that those, to whom God is pleased to make immediate revelations of his will, are some way or other assured that they are divine; otherwise they would be in vain, and to no purpose.

But how men are assured concerning divine revelations made to them, is not so easy to make out to others; only these two things we are sure of.

1. That God can work in the mind of man a firm persuasion of the truth of what he reveals, and that such a revelation is from him. This no man can doubt of, that considers the great power and influence,

SERM. fluence, which God, who made us, and perfectly
LVI. knows our frame, must needs have upon our minds
and understandings.

2. That God never offers any thing to any man's belief, that plainly contradicts the natural and essential notions of his mind ; because this would be for God to destroy his own workmanship, and to impose that upon the understanding of man, which whilst it remains what it is, it cannot possibly admit.

For instance, we cannot imagine that God should reveal to any man any thing that plainly contradicts the essential perfections of the divine nature : for such a revelation can no more be supposed to be from God, than a revelation from God, that there is no God ; which is a downright contradiction.

Now to apply this to the revelation which God made to Abraham, concerning the sacrificing of his son : this was made to him by an audible voice, and he was fully satisfied by the evidence which it carried along with it, that it was from God.

For this was not the first of many revelations that had been made to him, so that he knew the manner of them, and had found by manifold experience, that he was not deceived, and upon this experience was grown to a great confidence in the truth and goodness of God. And it is very probable, the first time God appeared to Abraham, because it was a new thing, that to make way for the credit of future revelations, God did shew himself to him in so glorious a manner, as was abundantly to his conviction.

And

And this St. Stephen does seem to intimate, Acts SERM. LVI. vii. 2. "The God of glory appeared to our father

"Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia." Now by this glorious appearance of God to him at first, he was so prepared for the entertainment of after-revelations, that he was not staggered even at this, concerning the sacrificing of his son, being both by the manner of it, and the assurance that accompanied it, fully satisfied, that it was from God.

Secondly, I observe from hence the great and necessary use of reason in matters of faith. For we see here, that Abraham's reason was a mighty strengthening and help to his faith. Here were two revelations made to Abraham, which seemed to clash with one another; and if Abraham's reason could not have reconciled the repugnancy of them, he could not possibly have believed them both to be from God; because this natural notion or principle, "that God cannot contradict himself," every man does first, and more firmly believe, than any revelation whatsoever.

Now Abraham's reason relieved him in this strait. So the text expressly tells us, "he reasoned with himself, that God was able to raise him from the dead."

And this being admitted, the command of God, concerning the slaying of Isaac, was very well consistent with his former promise, "that in Isaac his seed should be called."

I know, there hath a very rude clamour been raised by some persons, (but of more zeal, I think, than judgment) against the use of reason in matters of faith:

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faith : but how very unreasonable this is, will appear to any one that will but have patience to consider these following particulars.

1. The nature of divine revelation; that it doth not endow men with new faculties, but propoundeth new objects to the faculties, which they had before. Reason is the faculty whereby revelation is to be discerned; for when God reveals any thing to us, he reveals it to our understanding, and by that we are to judge of it. Therefore St. John cautions us, 1 John iv. 1. "not to believe every spirit; but to try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world;" that is, there are many that falsely pretend to inspiration: but how can these pretenders be tried and discerned from those that are truly inspired, but by using our reason, in comparing the evidence for the one and the other?

2. This will farther appear, if we consider the nature of faith. Faith (as we are now speaking of it) is an assent of the mind to something as revealed by God: now all assent must be grounded upon evidence; that is, no man can believe any thing, unless he have or thinks he hath some reason to do so. For to be confident of a thing without reason, is not faith; but a presumptuous persuasion and obstinacy of mind.

3. This will yet be more evident, if we consider the method, that must of necessity be used to convince any man of the truth of religion. Suppose, we had to deal with one that is a stranger and enemy to christianity, what means are proper to be used to gain

gain him over to it? the most natural method surely were this, to acquaint him with the holy scriptures, which are the rule of our faith and practice. He would ask us, "why we believe that book?" The proper answer would be, "because it is the word of God;" this he could not but acknowledge to be a very good reason, if it were true; but then he would ask "why he believed it to be the word of God, rather than Mahomet's alcoran, which pretends no less to be of divine inspiration?"

If any man now should answer, "that he could give no reason, why he believed it to be the word of God, only he believed it to be so, and so every man else ought to do without enquiring after any farther reason, because reason is to be laid aside in matters of faith;" would not the man presently reply, "that he had just as much reason as this comes to, to believe the alcoran, or any thing else;" that is, none at all?

But certainly the better way would be to satisfy this man's reason by proper arguments that the scriptures are a divine revelation, and that no other book in the world, can with equal reason pretend to be so: and if this be a good way, then we do and must call in the assistance of reason for the proof of our religion.

4. Let it be considered farther, that the highest commendations that are given in scripture to any one's faith, are given upon account of the reasonableness of it. Abraham's faith is famous, and made a pattern to all generations, because he reasoned himself into it, notwithstanding the objections

SERM. to the contrary, and he did not blindly break thro' these objections, and wink hard at them; but he looked them in the face, and gave himself reasonable satisfaction concerning them.

The centurion's faith is commended by our SAVIOUR, Matth. viii. 9. because when his servant was sick, he did not desire him to come to his house, but "to speak the word only, and his servant should be healed:" for he reasoned thus, "I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me, and I say to this man go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he cometh; and to my servant, do this, and he doth it." Now if he, that was himself under authority, could thus command those that were under him; much more could he that had a divine power and commission, do what he pleased by his word. And our SAVIOUR is so far from reprehending him for reasoning himself into this belief, that he admires his faith so much the more for the reasonableness of it, ver. 10. "When Jesus heard this, he marvelled, and said to them that followed him, verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel."

In like manner our SAVIOUR commends the woman of Canaan's faith, because she enforced it so reasonably, Matth. xv. 22. She sued him to help her daughter; "but he answered her not a word;" and when his disciples could not prevail with him to mind her, yet still she pressed him, "saying, Lord help me;" and when he repulsed her with this severe answer, "it is not meet to take the childrens bread and cast it to dogs;" she made this quick and

and modest reply, "truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat
" of the crumbs which fall from their masters ta-
" ble." She acknowledgeth her own unworthiness;
but yet believes his goodness to be such, that he
will not utterly reject those who humbly seek to
him; upon which he gives her this testimony, "O
" woman, great is thy faith!"

The apostles were divinely inspired; and yet the
Bereans are commended, because they inquired and
satisfied themselves in the reasons of their belief,
before they assented to the doctrine which was de-
livered to them, even by teachers that certainly were
infallible.

5. None are reprov'd in scripture for their unbe-
lief, but where sufficient reason and evidence was of-
fered to them. The Israelites were generally blamed
for their infidelity; but then it was after such mighty
wonders had been wrought for their conviction.

The Jews, in our SAVIOUR's time, are not con-
demned simply for their unbelief; but for not be-
lieving when there was such clear evidence offered to
them. So our SAVIOUR himself says, "if I had
" not done amongst them the works which no other
" man did, they had not had sin."

Thomas indeed is blamed for the perverseness of
his unbelief, because he would believe nothing but
what he himself saw.

Lastly, to shew this yet more plainly, let us consider
the great inconvenience and absurdity of declining
the use of reason in matters of religion. There can
be no greater prejudice to religion, than to decline
this trial.

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To say, we have no reason for our religion, is to say, it is unreasonable. Indeed it is reason enough for any article of our faith, that God hath revealed it; because this is one of the strongest and most cogent reasons for the belief of any thing. But when we say God hath revealed any thing, we must be ready to prove it, or else we say nothing. If we turn off reason here, we level the best religion in the world with the wildest and most absurd enthusiasms.

And it does not alter the case much, to give reason ill names, to call it blind, and carnal reason. Our best reason is but very short and imperfect: but since it is no better, we must make use of it as it is, and make the best of it.

Before I pass from this argument, I cannot but observe, that both the extremes of those who differ from our church, are generally great declaimers against the use of reason in matters of faith. If they find their account in it, 'tis well; for our parts we apprehend no manner of inconvenience, in having reason on our side; nor need we to desire a better evidence, that any man is in the wrong, than to hear him declare against reason, and thereby to acknowledge that reason is against him. Men may vilify reason as much as they please; and tho' being reviled she reviles not again, yet in a more still and gentle way, she commonly hath her full revenge upon all those that rail at her.

I have often wondered that people can with patience endure to hear their teachers and guides talk against reason; and not only so, but they pay them the greater submission and veneration for it. One would

would think this but an odd way to gain authority over the minds of men: but some skilful and designing men have found by experience, that it is a very good way to recommend them to the ignorant; as nurses use to endear themselves to children, by perpetual noise and nonsense.

Thirdly, I observe, that God obligeth no man to believe plain and evident contradictions, as matters of faith. Abraham could not reasonably have believed this second revelation to have been from God, if he had not found some way to reconcile it with the first. For tho' a man were never so much disposed to submit his reason to divine revelation; yet it is not possible for any man to believe God against God himself.

Some men seem to think, that they oblige God mightily, by believing plain contradictions. But the matter is quite otherwise. He that made man a reasonable creature, cannot take it kindly from any man to debase his workmanship, by making himself unreasonable. And therefore, as no service, or obedience; so no faith is acceptable unto God, but what is reasonable: if it be not so, it may be confidence or presumption; but it is not faith. For he that can believe plain contradictions, may believe any thing how absurd soever; because nothing can be more absurd, than the belief of a plain contradiction; and he that can believe any thing, believes nothing upon good grounds, because to him truth and falsehood are all one.

Fourthly, I observe, that the great cause of the defect of mens obedience is the weakness of their faith.

SERM. faith. Did we believe the commands of God in
 LVI. the gospel, and his promises and threatnings, as
 firmly as Abraham believed God in this case; what
 should we not be ready to do, or suffer, in obedience to him?

If our faith were but as strong and vigorous as his was, the effects of it would be as great and conspicuous. Were we verily persuaded, that all the precepts of our religion are the express laws of God, and that all the promises and threatnings of the gospel will one day be verified and made good; "what manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness?" How would the lively thoughts of another world, raise us above the vanities of this present life; and set us out of the reach of the most powerful temptations that this world can assault us withal; and make us to do all things with regard to eternity, and to that solemn and dreadful account which we must one day make to God the judge of all?

It is nothing but the want of a firm and steady belief of these things that makes our devotion so dead and heartless, and our resolutions of doing better so weak and inconstant. This it is that makes us so easy a prey to every temptation; and the things of this world to look so much bigger than they are, the enjoyments of it more tempting, and the evils of it more terrible than in truth they are; and in all disputes betwixt our conscience and our interest, this makes us hold the balance so unequally, and to put our foot upon the lighter scale, that it may seem to weigh down the other.

In

In a word, in proportion to the strength or weakness of our faith, our obedience to God will be more or less constant, uniform, and perfect; because faith is the great source and spring of all the virtues of a good life.

Fifthly, we have great reason to submit to the ordinary strokes of God's providence upon our selves, or near relations, or any thing that is dear to us. Most of these are easy, compared with Abraham's case; it requires a prodigious strength of faith to perform so miraculous an act of obedience.

Sixthly, and lastly, we are utterly inexcusable, if we disobey the easy precepts of the gospel. "The yoke of CHRIST is easy, and his burden light," in comparison of God's former dispensations. This was a grievous commandment which God gave to Abraham, to sacrifice his only son: "it was a hard saying indeed; and which of us could have been able to bear it?"

But if God think fit to call us to the more difficult duties of self-denial, and suffering for his truth and righteousness sake, we must, after the example of faithful Abraham, not think much to deny, or part with any thing for him, no not life it self. But even this, which is the hardest part of religion, is easier than what God put upon Abraham.

For it doth not offer near the violence to nature, to lay down our life in a good cause, as it would do to put a child to death with our own hands. Besides the consideration of the extraordinary comfort and support, and the glorious rewards

SERMON. that are expressly promised to our obedience and
 LVI. self-denial in such a case; encouragement enough
 to make a very difficult duty easy.

And whilst I am persuading you and my self to resolution and constancy in our holy religion, notwithstanding all hazards and hardships that may attend it, I have a just sense of the frailty of humane nature, and of humane resolution: but withal, a most firm persuasion of the goodness of God, that he will not suffer those who sincerely love him and his truth, "to be tempted above what they
 "are able."

I will add but one consideration more, to shew the difference betwixt Abraham's case and ours. God commanded him to do the hardest thing in the world, to sacrifice his only son; but he hath given us an easy commandment; and that he might effectually oblige us to our duty, he hath done that for us which he required Abraham to do for him; "he hath not spared his own son, his only son; "but hath given him up to death for us all: and "hereby we know, that he loveth us, that he hath "given his son for us."

What God required of Abraham, he did not intend should be executed; but one great design of it was to be a type and figure of that immense love and kindness which he intended to all mankind in the sacrifice of his son, as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

And as the most clear and express promise of the MESSIAS was made to Abraham; so the most express and lively type of the MESSIAS that we meet with

with in all the old testament, was Abraham's offering up his son. And as St. Hierom tells us (from an ancient and constant tradition of the Jews) the mountain in Moriah, where Abraham was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, was mount Calvary, where our LORD also was crucified and offered up, "that by this one sacrifice of himself once offered, he might perfect for ever them that are sanctified, and obtain eternal redemption for us."

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"Now to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb that was slain; to GOD even our father, and to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the first begotten from the dead; to the prince of the kings of the earth; to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory and honour, thanksgiving and power, now and for ever, Amen."

S E R M O N LVII.

Moses's choice of afflicted piety, rather
than a kingdom.

H E B. xi. 24, 25.

By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter ; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

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LVII.

Preached
at White-
hall, 1687.
before the
princess
Anne.

THE text sets before us a great pattern of self-denial: for our better understanding whereof I will give a brief account of the history of Moses, to which our apostle in this passage doth refer.

When Moses was born, his parents (for fear of the cruel law which Pharaoh had made, "that all the male children of the Hebrews, so soon as they were born, should be put to death") after they had hid him three months, did at last expose him in an ark of bulrushes, upon the river Nile, and committed him to the providence of God, whom they despaired to conceal any longer by their own care.

Pharaoh's daughter, coming by the river side, espied him, and had compassion on him; and guessing

sing him to be one of the hebrew children, called ^{SERM.} for an hebrew nurse, to take care of him, who, as ^{LVII.} the providence of God had ordered it, proved to be the child's own mother. As he grew up, Pharaoh's daughter took care of his education in all princely qualities, and adopted him for her son; and Pharaoh (as Josephus tells us) being without son, designed him heir of his kingdom.

Moses refused this great offer. But why did he refuse it, when it seemed to be presented to him by the providence of God, and was brought about in so strange a manner; and when by this means he might probably have had it in his power to have eased the Israelites of their cruel bondage, and perhaps have had the opportunity of reducing that great kingdom from the worship of idols to the true God? why would he refuse a kingdom which was offered to him with so fair an opportunity of doing so much good?

That which seems to have prevailed with Moses, was this, that he could not accept the offer without forsaking God, and renouncing his religion; for considering how strangely the Egyptians were addicted to idolatry, he could never hope to be accepted for heir of that kingdom, unless he would violate his conscience, either by abandoning or dissembling his religion.

And how unlikely it was, that he should prevail with them to change their religion, he might easily judge by the example of Joseph, who, tho' he had so much authority and esteem amongst them, by having been so great a benefactor to their nation; yet

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yet he could never move them in the least in that matter.

Now seeing he had no hopes of attaining, or enjoying that dignity, without sinning grievously against God, he would not purchase a kingdom at so unconscionable a price. And as for the deliverance of his people, he was content to trust the providence and promise of God for that; and in the mean time was resolved rather to take a part in the afflictions of God's people, "than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

From the words thus explained, I shall take occasion to consider these four things.

I. Moses's self-denial, in preferring and choosing a state of afflicted piety, before any sinful enjoyments whatsoever, before the greatest earthly happiness and prosperity, when it was not to be attained and enjoyed upon other terms than of sinning against God.

II. I shall consider those circumstances of this self-denial of Moses, which do very much commend and set off the virtue of it.

III. The prudence and reasonableness of this choice, in preferring a state of afflicted piety and virtue, before the greatest prosperity and pleasure of a sinful course.

IV. Supposing this choice to be reasonable, I shall enquire how it comes to pass, that so many make another choice.

I. We will consider Moses his self-denial, in preferring a state of afflicted piety before the greatest earthly happiness and prosperity, when it is not to be enjoyed

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enjoyed upon other terms, than of sinning against God. He was adopted heir of the kingdom of Egypt, (one of the greatest and most flourishing kingdoms then in the world;) but he could not hope to attain to this dignity, and to secure himself in the possession of it, upon other terms than of complying with that nation, in their idolatrous religion and worship.

Now being brought up in the belief of the true God, the God of Israel, by his mother, to whom Pharaoh's daughter had committed him, he could not, without great violence to his conscience, and the principles of his education, renounce the true God, and fall off to the idolatry of the Egyptians: and for this reason "he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the worshippers of the true God," than to have the temporary enjoyment of any thing that was not to be had without sin; for so the word ought to be render'd, ἢ προσηγορίῃ ἔχειν ἀμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν, "than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin." So here was Moses his self-denial; that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the worshippers of the true God, than to gain a kingdom, by the renouncing of God and religion.

II. We will consider those circumstances of his self-denial, which do very much commend and set off the virtue of it.

1. What it was he refused to be called; "the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" that is, to be the heir of one of the greatest and most flourishing kingdoms in the world: a temptation so great, that the devil him-

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himself could not find out one much greater, when he set upon the son of God to tempt him to fall down and worship him.

And when we consider for what inconsiderable things some men sell their religion and their consciences, we shall think it no small temptation which Moses here resisted. *Si violandum est jus, regnandi causâ violandum est*; "If a man would do any unjust thing, and violate his religion and conscience, he would not do it for less than a kingdom; and it would be a very hard bargain, even upon those terms."

2. Consider not only what he refused, but what he chose in the place of it; a state of great affliction and suffering. Had he refused a kingdom, and chosen the quiet condition of a subject of middle rank (beneath envy and above contempt) his self-denial had not been so great; nay, perhaps he had made a wise choice, in the account of the wisest men, in preferring a plentiful and quiet retirement, before the cares of a crown, and the burden of publick government.

But it is very rare to find a Man that would choose rather to be oppressed and persecuted, than to be a prince, and to have the sweet power to use others as he pleased.

3. Consider how fair a prospect he had of enjoying this kingdom, if he could but have come up to the terms of it. He did not reject it, because he despaired of attaining it: for he had all the right that a good title could give him, being adopted heir to it; and yet he refused it.

To

To which I may add, that his breeding was such as might easily kindle ambitious thoughts in him. He was brought up in Pharaoh's court, and was the darling and favourite of it; exceeding beautiful (as Josephus tells us) "and learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;" than which, no two qualities are more apt to puff up and swell a man with big thoughts of himself.

They that are bred in a low condition, never think of a kingdom; men not being apt to aspire to things which are remote, and at a great distance from them.

But nothing is more rare in persons of great and generous minds, than such a self-denial as this.

4. Let it be considered, in the last place, that this was a deliberate choice, not any rash and sudden determination made by him when he was of incompetent age to make a true judgment of things. And this the apostle takes notice of in the text, as a very memorable circumstance, "that when he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." And St. Stephen tells us, that he was full forty years old when he made this choice, Acts vii. 23. "When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." When he was of ripest judgment, and in the height of his prosperity and reputation, he made this choice; for it is said in the verse before, "that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in word and deed;" that is, he was in great reputation for his wisdom and valour.

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This seems to refer to other passages of his life, which are not recorded in the scripture history, but related at large by Josephus, out of historians extant in his time. For he tells, that when the Ethiopians had invaded Egypt, and almost over-run it, Pharaoh was directed by the oracle at Memphis, to make Moses his general, who by his extraordinary conduct and courage overthrew the Ethiopians, and drove them out of Egypt.

This Moses did not think fit to relate of himself; but St. Stephen seems to allude to it, when he says, “that he was mighty in word and deed:” And then it follows; “and when he was full forty years old, it came in his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel;” that is, when he was at full maturity of judgment, and in the height of his prosperity and reputation, he quitted the court of Egypt, and went to visit his afflicted brethren, and chose rather to take part with them in their sufferings, than to accept those great offers that were made to him.

There is likewise another passage in Josephus concerning Moses, which seems to be a forerunner of the contempt which he shewed afterwards of the crown of Egypt; that when Moses was about three years old, Thermusis, the daughter of Pharaoh, brought the child to him, who took him in his arms, and put his diadem upon his head; but Moses took it off, and cast it to the ground, and trampled it under his feet. This was but a childish act, and they who saw it, would easily believe, that, for all his childish contempt of it then, if it were put upon his

head

head in good earnest, when he came to be a man, he would hold it on faster, and use it with more respect.

And it is not improbable; but that the apostle might have some regard to this, when he says, “that Moses when he comes to years;” intimating that he did not only trample upon the diadem of Pharaoh, when he was a child; but when he was come to years, and was capable of judging better of those things, “he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

But before I proceed any farther, I cannot but take notice of an objection, which may seem to reflect greatly upon the integrity of Moses. Can we think him so very conscientious a man, who persuaded the people of Israel, and pretended God’s direction in the case, to cheat the Egyptians of their jewels under a fraudulent pretence of borrowing them? There is some difficulty in the thing, as at first sight it appears: and yet I doubt not, with your favourable attention, and free from prejudice, to vindicate Moses clearly in this matter.

And I shall not insist upon that which is commonly and truly said in this case; that God, who is the supreme LORD of all things, may transfer the rights of men from one to another: because the objection doth not lie against God’s right to take away from any man what he hath given him; but against the fraudulent manner of doing it, which seems unworthy of God to command or encourage.

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Now this matter, I think, is capable of another and much clearer answer; which in short is this, and grounded upon the history, as we find it related, Exod. xii. The providence of God did, it seems, design by this way to make some reparation to the Israelites, for the tyrannical usage which they had received from the Egyptians; and that first (as the text expressly tells us) “in giving them favour “with the Egyptians,” who in truth, for their own ends, and to get rid of such troublesome guests, were disposed to lend them any thing they had.

Thus far all is right; here is nothing but fair borrowing and lending: and if the Israelites acquired a right to those things afterwards, there was then no obligation to restitution.

Let us see then how the providence of God brought this about: namely, by permitting the Egyptians afterwards, without cause, and after leave given them to depart, to pursue them, with a design to have destroyed them; by which hostility and perfidiousness they plainly forfeited their right to what they had only lent before. For this hostile attempt, which would have warranted the Israelites to have spoiled them of their jewels, if they had been in the possession of the Egyptians, did certainly warrant them to keep them when they had them; and by this means they became rightful possessors of what they had only by loan before, and could not have detained without fraud and injustice, if this hostility of the Egyptians had not given them a new title and clear right to them.

But

But I proceed to the third thing I proposed, which was to vindicate the prudence and reasonableness of this choice. And in speaking to this, I shall abstract from the particular case of Moses, and shew in general, “that it is a prudent and reasonable thing, to prefer even an afflicted state of piety and virtue, before the greatest pleasures and prosperity of a sinful course :” and this will appear, if we consider these two things.

I. The sufferings of good men upon account of religion, together with the reward of them.

II. The temporary enjoyment of sin, with the mischiefs and inconveniencies consequent upon them.

I. The sufferings of good men upon the account of religion, together with the reward of them. This Moses had in his eye, when he made this choice; for therefore “he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin which are but for a season, because he had respect to the recompence of reward.” And tho’ he had but a very imperfect discovery in comparison of the future state; yet, it seems, he had so much assurance of the goodness of God, as firmly to believe, that he should be no loser at the last, by any thing that he suffered for God and religion.

Indeed, if there were no life after this, and we had no expectation beyond this world, the wisest thing we could do, would be to enjoy as much of the present contentment of this world, as we could make ourselves masters of. But if we be designed
for

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for immortality, and shall be unspeakably happy; or intolerably miserable in another world, according as we have demeaned ourselves in this life; then certainly it is reasonable, that we should take the greatest care of the longest duration, and be content to dispense with some present inconveniencies for an eternal felicity; and be willing to labour and take pains for a little while, that we may be happy for ever. And this is accounted prudence in the account of the wisest men, to part with a little in present, for a far greater future advantage.

But the disproportion betwixt time and eternity is so vast, that did we but firmly believe, that we shall live for ever, nothing in this world could reasonably be thought too good to part withal, or too grievous to suffer, for the obtaining of a blessed immortality. And upon this belief and persuasion of a mighty reward, beyond all their present sufferings, and that they should be infinite gainers at the last, the primitive christians were kept from sinking under their present sufferings, and fortified against all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do unto them. And if we would consider all things together, and mind the invisible things of another world, as well as the things which are seen, we should easily discern, that he who suffers for God and religion does not renounce his happiness, but put it out to interest upon terms of greatest advantage, and does wisely consider his own best and most lasting interest. This is the first.

II. This will yet more evidently appear, if we consider the temporary enjoyments of sin, together with

with the mischiefs and inconveniencies attending, and consequent upon them; that as to the nature of them, they are mix'd and imperfect; as to the duration of them, they are short, and but for a season; as to the final issue and consequence of them, that they end in misery and sorrow.

1. As to the nature of them, all the pleasures and enjoyments of sin are mix'd and imperfect. A wicked man may make a shew of mirth and pleasure, "but even in laughter his heart is sorrowful, and "the end of that mirth is heaviness." There can be no true and sincere pleasure in any sinful and vicious course, tho' it be attended with all the pomp and splendor of outward happiness and prosperity; for wherever sin and vice is, there must be guilt; and wherever guilt is, the mind will be restless and unquiet.

For there are two very troublesome and tormenting passions, which are naturally consequent upon guilt; shame and fear: shame, arising from the apprehension of the danger of being discovered; and fear, from the apprehension of the danger of being punished: and these do continually haunt the sinner, and fill him with inward horror and confusion in his most secret retirements. And if sin were attended with no other trouble but the guilt of it, a wise man would not commit it, if it were for no other reason, but merely for the peace and quiet of his own mind.

2. The enjoyments of sin as to the duration of them, are but short. Upon this consideration, Moses set no price and value upon them, but preferred

SER M. ferred affliction and suffering in good company,
 LVII. and in a good cause, before "the temporary enjoy-
 ments of sin."

If the enjoyments of this world were perfect in their nature, and had no mixture of trouble and sorrow in them; yet this would be a great abatement of them, that they are of so short and uncertain a continuance. The pleasure of most sins expires with the act of them; and when that is done, the delight vanisheth.

I cannot deny but that there are several worldly advantages to be purchased by sin, which may perhaps be of a longer continuance; as riches and honours, the common purchase of covetousness and ambition, and of that long train of inferior vices which attend upon them, and minister unto them: but even those enjoyments are, in their own nature, of an uncertain continuance, and much more uncertain for being purchased by indirect and ill means. But if the enjoyment of these things were sure to be of the same date with our lives; yet how short a duration is that, compared with eternity? make the utmost allowance to these things, that can be, yet we can but enjoy them whilst we are in this world. When we come into the world of spirits, it will signify nothing to us to have been rich or great in this world. When we shall stand before that highest tribunal, it will not avail us in the least to have been princes, and great men, and judges on the earth; the poorest man that ever lived in this world, will then be upon equal terms with the biggest of us all.

For

For all mankind shall then stand upon a level, SERM.
LVII. and those civil distinctions of rich and poor, of base and honourable, which seem now so considerable, and make such a glaring difference amongst men in this world, shall all then be laid aside, and moral differences shall only take place. All the distinctions which will then be made, will be betwixt the good and the bad, the righteous and the wicked; and the difference betwixt a good and bad man, will be really much greater, than ever it seemed to be betwixt the highest and meanest persons in this world.

And if this be so, why should we value the enjoyments of sin at so high a rate, which, at the best, are only considerable (and that only in the imagination of vain men) during our abode in this world; but bear no price at all in that country where we must live for ever: or if they did, we cannot carry them along with us. The guilt of them, indeed, will follow us with a vengeance; the injustice and all the ill arts we have used for the getting or keeping of them, especially, if at once we have “made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.”

If we have changed our religion, or, which is much worse, if continuing in the profession of it, we have betrayed it, and the interest of it, for the gaining or securing of any of these things; we shall find, to our sorrow, that tho’ “the enjoyments of sin were but for a season,” the guilt of it will never leave us nor forsake us; but will stick close to us, and make us miserable for ever. But this belongs to the

III^d Thing I propos'd to speak to, namely, the final issue and consequence of a sinful course, which is misery and sorrow, many times in this world; but most certainly in the next.

1. In this world, the very best issue and consequence of a sinful course, that we can imagine, is repentance: and even this hath a great deal of sensible pain and trouble in it; for it is many times (especially after great sins, and a long continuance in them,) accompanied with much regret and horror; with deep and piercing sorrow; with dismal and despairing thoughts of God's mercy; and with fearful apprehensions of his wrath and vengeance. So that, if this were the worst consequence of sin, (which indeed is the best) no man that considers and calculates things wisely, would purchase the pleasure of any sin, at the price of so much anguish and sorrow as a true and deep repentance will cost him; especially, since a true repentance does, in many cases, oblige men to the restitution of that which hath been gained by sin, if it been hath got by the injury of another.

And this consideration quite takes away the pleasure and profit of an ill-gotten estate. Better never to have had it, than to be obliged to refund it. A wise man will forbear the most pleasant meats, if he know before-hand that they will make him deadly sick, and that he shall never be at ease, till he have brought them up again.

No man that believes the threatnings of God, and the judgments of another world, would ever
sin,

sin, but that he hopes to retrieve all again by repentance. But it is the greatest folly in the world to commit any sin upon this hope: for that is to please ones self for the present, in hopes to have more trouble afterwards than the pleasure comes to. But, especially no man would be guilty of an act of injustice and oppression, in hopes to repent of it afterwards; because there can be no repentance for such sins without restitution; and 'tis perfect madness for a man to run the hazard of his soul, to get an estate, in hopes of restoring it again; for so he must do that truly repents of such a sin. But,

2. In the other world, the final issue and consequence of all the pleasures of sin unrepented of, will certainly be misery and sorrow. How quietly soever a sinner may pass through this world, or out of it, misery will certainly overtake him in the next, unspeakable and eternal misery, arising from an apprehension of the greatest loss, and a sense of the sharpest pain; and those sadly aggravated by the remembrance of past pleasure, and the despair of future ease.

From a sad apprehension and melancholy reflexion upon his inestimable loss. In the other world the sinner shall be eternally separated from God, who is the fountain of happiness. This is the first part of that miserable sentence which shall be past upon the wicked; "depart from me."

Sinners are not now sensible of the joys of heaven, and the happiness of that state, and therefore are not capable of estimating the greatness of such

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a loss: but this stupidity and insensibleness of sinners, continues only during this present state, which affords men variety of objects and pleasures to divert and entertain them: but when they are once enter'd upon the other world, they will then have nothing else to take up their thoughts, but the sad condition, into which by their own wilful negligence and folly they have plunged themselves. They shall then lift up their eyes, and with the rich man in the parable, at once see the happiness of others, and feel their own misery and torment.

But this is not all. Besides the apprehension of so great a loss, they shall be sensible of the sorest and sharpest pains; and how grievous those shall be we may conjecture by what the scripture says of them in general; that they are the effects of a mighty displeasure, of anger and omnipotence met together, far greater than can be described by any pains and sufferings which we are acquainted withal in this world: "for who knows the power of God's anger," and the utmost of what omnipotent justice can do to sinners? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

One would think, this were misery enough, and needed no farther aggravation: but yet it hath two terrible ones; from the remembrance of past pleasures, and the despair of any future ease and remedy.

The remembrance of past pleasure makes present sufferings more sharp and sensible. For as nothing commends pleasure more, and gives a quicker relish to happiness, than precedent pain and suffering:

ing:

ing: (for perhaps there is not a greater pleasure in SERM. LVII. the world, than in the sudden ease which a man finds after a sharp fit of the stone) so nothing enrageth affliction more, and sets a keener edge upon misery, than to pass into great pain immediately out of a state of ease and pleasure. This was the stinging aggravation of the rich man's torment, "that in his life-time he had received his good things, and had fared so deliciously every day."

But the greatest aggravation of all is, the despair of any future ease and remedy. The duration of this misery is set forth to us in scripture, by such expressions as do signify the longest and most interminable duration, "depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, Matth. xxv. and Mark ix. 43. where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." And in the Revelation it is said, "that the wicked shall be tormented, day and night, for ever and ever;" without intermission, and without end. And this surely is the perfection of misery, for a man to lie under the greatest torments, and to be in despair of ever finding the least ease.

Let us now compare things together; on the one hand, the sufferings of good men, for a good conscience, and the reward that follows them; and on the other hand, the enjoyments of sin, and the mischief and misery that attend them, and will certainly overtake them in this world, or in the next: and then we shall easily discern which of these is to be preferred in a wise man's choice.

And

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And indeed the choice is so very plain, that a man must be very strangely forsaken of his reason, and blinded by sense, who does not prefer that course of life, which will probably make him happier in this world, but most certainly in the next.

IV. There remains now only the fourth and last particular to be spoken to ; viz. supposing this choice to be reasonable, to enquire whence it comes to pass that so many make a quite contrary choice, How is it, that the greatest part of mankind are so widely mistaken, as to prefer the temporary enjoyments of sin before conscience and religion ; especially, if it be attended with great afflictions and sufferings ? and of this, I shall give you as brief an account as I can, and so conclude this discourse.

This wrong choice generally proceeds from one or both of these two causes ; from want of faith ; or from want of consideration ; or of both.

I. One great reason why men make so imprudent a choice, is unbelief ; either the want of faith, or the weakness of it. Either men do not believe the recompences of another life, or they are not so firmly persuaded of the reality of them. If men do not at all believe these things, there is no foundation for religion ; “ for he that cometh unto God “ (that is, he that thinks of being religious) “ must believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,” as the apostle reasons in the beginning of this chapter.

But I hope, there are but few that are, or can be infidels, as to these great and fundamental principles of religion. But it is to be feared, that the
faith

faith of a great many is but weak and wavering; their faith is rather negative; they do not disbelieve these things, but they are not firmly persuaded of them; their faith is rather an opinion, than a rooted and well-grounded persuasion; and therefore no wonder, if it be not so strong and vigorous a principle of action, like the faith of Abraham and Moses, and other worthies mentioned in this chapter. For where faith is in its full strength and vigour, it will have proportionable effects upon the resolutions and wills of men: but where it is but weak, it is of little or no efficacy. And this is the true reason, why so many forsake religion, and cleave to this present world; and when it comes to the push, choose rather to sin, than to suffer; and will rather quit the truth, than endure persecution for it.

These are they whom our SAVIOUR describes, “who receive the word with joy, and endure for a while; but when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, presently they are offended:” not that they did not believe the word; but their faith had taken no deep root, and therefore it withered. The weakness and wavering of mens faith, makes them unstable and inconstant in their course; because they are not of one mind, but divided betwixt two interests, that of this world, and the other; “and the double-minded man (as St. James tells us) is unstable in all his ways.”

It is generally a true rule; so much wavering as we see in the actions and lives of men, so much weakness there is in their faith; and therefore

he

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he that would know what any man firmly believes, let him attend to his actions more than to his professions.

If any man live so as no man that heartily believes the christian religion can live, it is not credible, that such a man doth firmly believe the christian religion. He says he does ; but there is a greater evidence in the case than words ; there is *testimonium rei*, the man's actions are to the contrary, and they do best declare the inward sense of the man. Did men firmly believe, that there is a God that governs the world, " and that he hath appointed a " day, wherein he will judge it in righteousness ; " and that all mankind shall shortly appear before him, and give an account of themselves, and all their actions to him ; and that those " who have kept " the faith and a good conscience, and have lived " soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present " world," shall be unspeakably and eternally happy ; " but the fearful and unbelieving," those who out of fear or interest, have deserted the faith, or lived wicked lives, " shall have their portion in the lake, " which burns with fire and brimstone ; " I say, were men firmly persuaded of these things, it is hardly credible that any man should make a wrong choice, and forsake the ways of truth and righteousness, upon any temptation whatsoever.

Faith, even in temporal matters, is a mighty principle of action, and will make men to attempt and undergo strange and difficult things. The faith of the gospel ought to be much more operative and powerful, because the objects of hope and fear,
which

which it presents to us, are far greater, and more considerable, than any thing that this world can tempt or terrify us withal. SERM.
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Would we but by faith make present to our minds, the invisible things of another world, the happiness of heaven, and the terrors of hell; and were we as verily persuaded of them, as if they were in our view; how should we despise all the pleasures and terrors of this world; and with what ease should we resist and repel all those temptations, which would seduce us from our duty, or draw us into sin!

A firm and unshaken belief of these things, would effectually remove all those mountains of difficulty and discouragement, which men fancy to themselves in the ways of religion. "To him that believeth, all things are possible," and most things would be easy.

2. Another reason of this wrong choice is want of consideration; for this would strengthen our faith, and make it more vigorous and powerful: and indeed a faith which is well rooted and established doth suppose a wise and deep consideration of things; and the want of this is a great cause of the fatal miscarriage of men; that they do not sit down and consider with themselves seriously, how much religion is their interest, and how much it will cost them to be true to it, and to persevere in it to the end.

We suffer our selves to be governed by sense, and to be transported with present things; but do not consider our future and lasting interest, and the

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whole duration of an immortal soul. And this is the reason, why so man many are hurried away by the present and sensible delights of this world, because they will not take time to think of what will be hereafter.

For it is not to be imagined, but that the man who hath seriously considered what sin is, the shortness of its pleasure, and the eternity of its punishment, should resolve to forsake sin, and to live a holy and virtuous life.

To conclude this whole discourse. If men did but seriously believe the great principles of religion; the being and the providence of God; the immortality of their souls; the glorious rewards, and the dreadful punishments of another world, they could not possibly make so imprudent a choice, as we see a great part of mankind to do, they could not be induced to forsake God and religion for any temporal interest and advantage; to renounce the favour of heaven, and all their hopes of happiness in another world, for any thing that this world can afford; nay not for the whole world, if it were offered to them. For as our SAVIOUR reasons in this very case, of forsaking our religion for any temporal interest, or consideration; "what is a man profited if he
" gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?
" or what shall a man give in exchange for his
" soul?

Whenever any of us are tempted in this kind; let that solemn declaration of our SAVIOUR and our judge be continually in our minds; "he that confesseth me before men, him will I confess also
before

“ before my father which is in heaven: but who-
“ soever shall be ashamed of me and of my words
“ in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him
“ shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall
“ come in the glory of his father, with his holy
“ angels.”

And we have great cause to thank God, to see
so many in this day of trial, and hour of temptation,
to adhere with so much resolution and constancy
to their holy religion, and to prefer “ the keeping
“ of faith, and a good conscience,” to all earthly
considerations and advantages.

And this very thing, that so many hold their
religion so fast, and are so loth to part with it, gives
great hopes that they intend to make good use of
it, and to frame their lives according to the holy
rules and precepts of it; which alone can give us
peace, whilst we live, and comfort when we come
to die; and after death secure to us the possession
of a happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our
souls.

“ To which, God of his infinite goodness bring
“ us all, for his mercy’s sake, in JESUS CHRIST:
“ to whom, with the FATHER, and the HOLY
“ GHOST, be all honour and glory, world without
“ end. Amen.”

S E R M O N LVIII.

Of constancy in the profession of the true religion.

H E B. x., 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ; for he is faithful that promised.

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The first
sermon on
this text.

THE main scope and design of this epistle to the Hebrews is to persuade the Jews, who were newly converted to christianity, to continue stedfast in the profession of that holy and excellent religion which they had embraced ; and not to be removed from it, either by the subtle insinuations of their brethren the Jews, who pretended that they were in possession of the true ancient religion, and the only true church of God upon earth ; or by the terror of the heathen persecution, which was so hot against them at that time. And to this end the author of this epistle doth by great variety of arguments demonstrate the excellency of the christian religion above the jewish dispensation ; and shews at large, that in all those respects upon which the Jews valued themselves and their religion (as namely upon the account of their lawgiver, their high-priests, and their sacrifices) the christian religion had every way the advantage of them.

And

And having made this clear, he concludes with an earnest exhortation to them to continue stedfast in the profession of this excellent religion, which was revealed to them by the SON of GOD, the true propitiatory sacrifice, and the great high-priest of their profession, and into which they had solemnly been initiated and admitted by baptism; ver. 19, 20, 21, 22. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of JESUS, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high-priest over the house of GOD; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," that is, let us sincerely serve GOD with a firm persuasion of the truth and excellency of this holy religion, into the profession whereof we were solemnly admitted by baptism; for that is undoubtedly the meaning of the following words; "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water;" the water, with which our bodies are washed in baptism, signifying our spiritual regeneration, "and the purging our consciences from dead works, to serve the living GOD." From all which he concludes, "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering:" This refers to that solemn profession of faith, which was made by all christians at their baptism, and which is contained in the ancient creed of the christian church, called by the ancient fathers, "the rule of faith."

Let us hold fast, *κατέχωμεν*, let us firmly retain; the same with *κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας*, chap. iv. 14.

"Seeing then we have a great high-priest which is
" passed

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“ passed into the heavens, JESUS the SON of GOD, “ let us take fast hold of our profession.” So here in the text, the apostle upon the same consideration exhorts christians to retain or hold fast, ^ἢ ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος, the confession, or profession of their hope; that is, the hope of the resurrection of the dead, and everlasting life, which was the conclusion of that faith or creed, whereof in baptism they made a solemn profession. “ Let us hold fast the profession of our faith or hope, without wavering;” the word is ἀκλινῇ, inflexible, unmoveable, steady, and not apt to waver and be shaken by every wind of contrary doctrine, nor by the blasts and storms of persecution. “ For he is faithful that hath promised.” If we continue faithful and steady to GOD, he will be faithful to make good all the promises he hath made to us.

In the words thus explained, there are two things which I shall distinctly consider.

First, the exhortation; “ let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering:” and,

Secondly, the argument or encouragement used to enforce it; “ he is faithful that promised.” I begin with the

First, the exhortation, to be constant and steady in the profession of the christian religion; “ let us “ hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” In the handling of this, and that we may the better understand the true meaning of this exhortation here in the text, I shall do these two things.

I. I shall shew negatively, wherein this constancy and steadiness in the profession of the true religion

does

does not consist. And here I shall remove one or two things which are thought by some to be inconsistent with constancy and stedfastness in religion.

II. I shall shew positively, what is implied in a constant and steady profession of the true religion.

I. I shall shew negatively, what constancy and stedfastness in the profession of the true religion does not imply. And there are two things which are thought by some to be implied, "in holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

First, that men should not take the liberty to examine their religion, and enquire into the grounds and reasons of it.

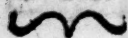
Secondly, that men should obstinately refuse to hear any reasons that can be brought against the true religion, as they think, which they have once entertained.

First, that men should not take the liberty to examine their religion, and to enquire into the grounds and reasons of it. This, I think, is so far from being forbidden in this exhortation; that, on the contrary, I doubt not to make it appear, that a free and impartial enquiry into the grounds and reasons of our religion, and a thorough trial and examination of them, is one of the best means to confirm and establish us in the profession of it: I mean, that all persons that are capable of it should do it, and that they will find great benefit and advantage by it. For I do not think, that this is a duty equally and indifferently incumbent upon all; nor indeed fit and proper for all persons; because all are not equally capable of doing it. There are two sorts of persons that are in a great measure incapable of doing it.

1. Children.

2. Such

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2. Such grown persons as are of a very mean and low capacity, and improvement of understanding.

Children are not fit to examine, but only to learn and believe what is taught them by their parents and teachers. They are fit to have the fear of God, and the principles of the true religion, instilled into them: but they are by no means fit to discern between a true and false religion, and to choose for themselves, and to make a change of their religion; as hath of late been allowed to them in a nation not far from us, and by publick edict declared, that children at seven years old, are fit to choose and to change their religion: which is the first law I ever heard of, that allows children at that age to do any act for themselves, that is of consequence and importance to them, for the remaining parts of their lives, and which they shall stand obliged to perform and make good. They are indeed baptized, according to the custom and usage of the christian church, in their infancy: but they do not enter into this obligation themselves; but their sureties undertake for them, that when they come to age, they shall take this promise upon themselves, and confirm and make it good. But surely, they can do no act for themselves, and in their own name, at that age, which can be obligatory. They can neither make any contracts that shall be valid, nor incur any debt, nor oblige themselves by any promise, nor choose themselves a guardian, nor do any act that may bring them under an inconvenience, when they shall come at age. And can we think them of discretion sufficient at that time, to do a thing of the greatest moment and consequence of all other; and which will concern them

them to all eternity; namely, to choose their religion? There is indeed one part of one religion (which we all know) which children at seven years of age are fit (I do not say to judge of, but) to be as fond of, and to practise to as good purpose as those of riper years; and that is, to worship images; to tell their beads, to say their prayers, and to be present at the service of God in an unknown tongue; and this they are more likely to choose at that age, than those who are of riper and more improved understandings; and if they do not choose it at that time, it is ten to one, they will not choose it afterwards. I shall say no more of this, but that it is a very extraordinary law, and such as perhaps was never thought of before, from the beginning of the world. Thus much for children.

As for grown persons, who are of a very low and mean capacity of understanding, and either by reason of the weakness of their faculties, or other disadvantages which they lie under, are in little or no probability of improving themselves: these are always to be considered as in the condition of children and learners, and therefore must of necessity, in things, which are not plain and obvious to the meanest capacities, trust and rely upon the judgment of others. And it is really much wiser and safer for them so to do, than to depend upon their own judgments, and to lean to their own understandings; and such persons, if they be modest and humble, and pray earnestly to God for his assistance and direction, and are careful to practise what they know, and to live up to the best light and knowledge which they have, shall not miscarry merely for want of those farther

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degrees of knowledge which they had no capacity nor opportunity to attain ; because their ignorance is unavoidable, and God will require no more of them than he hath given them, and will not call them to account for the improvement of those talents, which he never committed to them. And if they be led into any dangerous error, by the negligence or ill conduct of those, under whose care and instruction the providence of God permitted them to be placed, God will not impute it to them as a fault ; because in the circumstances in which they were, they took the best and wisest course that they could, to come to the knowledge of the truth, by being willing to learn what they could of those whom they took to be wiser than themselves.

But for such persons, who by the maturity of their age, and by the natural strength and clearness of their understandings, or by the due exercise and improvement of them, are capable of enquiring into, and understanding the grounds of their religion, and discerning the difference betwixt truth and error (I do not mean in unnecessary points, and matters of deepest learning and speculation, but in matters necessary to salvation) it is certainly very reasonable, that such persons should examine their religion, and understand the reasons and grounds of it.

And this must either be granted to be reasonable, or else every man must continue in that religion in which he happens to be fixed by education, or for any other reason to pitch upon, when he comes to years, and makes his free choice. For if this be a good principle, that no man is to examine his religion,

religion, but take it as it is, and to believe it, and rest satisfied with it; then every man is to remain in the religion which he first lights upon, whether by choice or the chance of his education. For he ought not to change but upon reason; and reason he can have none, unless he be allowed to examine his religion, and to compare it with others, that by the comparison he may discern which is best, and ought in reason to be preferred in his choice. For to him that will not, or is not permitted to search into the grounds of any religion, all religions are alike; as all things are of the same colour to him that is always kept in the dark; or if he happens to come into the light, dares not open his eyes, and make use of them to discern the different colours of things.

But this is evidently, and at first sight unreasonable; because at this rate, every man that hath once entertained an error, and a false religion, must for ever continue in it. For if he be not allowed to examine it, he can never have reason to change; and to make a change without reason, is certainly unreasonable, and mere vanity and inconstancy.

And yet, for ought I can see, this is the principle which the church of Rome doth with great zeal and earnestness inculcate upon their people; discouraging all doubts and enquiries about their religion, as temptations of the devil; and all examinations of the grounds and reasons of their religion, as an inclination and dangerous step towards heresy. For what else can they mean, by taking the scriptures out of the hands of the people, and locking them up from them in an unknown tongue; by requiring them ab-

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solutely to submit their judgments, and to resign them up to that which they are pleased to call the catholick church, and implicitly to believe as she believes, tho' they know not what that is? This is, in truth, to believe as their priest tells them; for that is all the teaching part of the church, and all the rule of faith that the common people are acquainted with.

And it is not sufficient to say in this matter, that when men are in the truth, and of the right religion, and in the bosom of the true church, they ought to rest satisfied, and to examine and enquire no farther. For this is manifestly unreasonable, and that upon these three accounts.

1. Because this is a plain and shameful begging of the thing in question; and that which every church, and every religion doth almost with equal confidence pretend to; that theirs is the only right religion, and the only true church. And these pretences are all alike reasonable to him that never examined the grounds of any of them, nor hath compared them together. And therefore it is the vainest thing in the world for the church of Rome to pretend, that all religions in the world ought to be examined, but theirs; because theirs, and none else, is the true religion. For this which they say so confidently of it, that it is the true religion, no man can know till he hath examined it, and searched into the grounds of it, and hath considered the objections which are against it. So that it is fond partiality to say, that their religion is not to be examined by the people that profess it, but that all other religions

ligions ought to be examined, or rather, because they are different from that which they presume to be the only true religion, ought to be condemned at all adventures, without any farther enquiry : this, I say, is fond partiality ; because every religion and every church may (for ought that appears to any man that is not permitted to examine things impartially) say the same for themselves, and with as much Reason ; and if so, then either every religion ought to permit it self to be examined ; or else no man ought to examine his own religion, whatever it be ; and consequently jews, and turks, and heathens, and hereticks, ought all to continue as they are, and none of them to change ; because they cannot reasonably change, without examining both that religion which they leave, and that which they embrace instead of it.

2. Admitting this pretence were true, that they are the true church, and have the true religion ; this is so far from being a reason why they should not permit it to be examined, that, on the contrary, it is one of the best reasons in the world, why they should allow it to be examined, and why they may safely suffer it to be so. They should permit it to be tried, that men may upon good reason be satisfied that it is the true religion : and they may safely suffer it to be done ; because, if they be sure that the grounds of their religion be firm and good, I am sure they will be never the worse for being examined and look'd into. But I appeal to every man's reason, whether it be not an ill sign that they are not so sure that the grounds of their religion are solid and firm, and such as will abide the trial, that they are so very loth to have

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have them searched into and examined? This cannot but tempt a wise man to suspect, that their church is not founded upon a rock; and that they themselves know something that is amiss in their religion, which makes them so loth to have it tried, and brought to the touch.

3. It is certain among all christians, that the doctrine preached by the apostles was the true faith of CHRIST; and yet they never forbad the christians to examine whether it was so or not: nay, on the contrary, they frequently exhort them to try and examine their religion, and whether that doctrine which they had delivered to them was the true faith of CHRIST. So St. Paul, 2 Corinth. xiii. 5. "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; "prove your own selves." And again, 1 Thes. v. 21. "prove all things, hold fast that which is good;" intimating to us, that in order to the holding fast the profession of our faith, it is requisite to prove and try it. And so likewise St. John's Ep. i. iv. 1. be-
"loved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits
"whether they are of God; because many false
"prophets are gone out into the world." And he gives a very notable mark, whereby we may know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. The spirit of error carries on a worldly interest and design; and the doctrines of it tend to secular power and greatness; verse 5. "they are of the world; "therefore speak they of the world, and the world
"heareth them." Act. xvii. 11. St. Luke commends it as an argument of a more noble and generous spirit in the Bereans, that they examined the doctrine
which

which the apostles preach'd. "whether it were agree-
"able to the scriptures;" and this without dispa-
ragement to their infallibility, "these, saith he, were
"more noble than those of Theſſalonica, in that
"they received the word with all readineſs of mind,
"and ſearched the ſcriptures daily, whether thoſe
"things were ſo." They were ready to receive the
word; but not blindly, and with an implicit faith,
but uſing due care to examine the doctrines which
they were taught, and to ſee if they were agreeable
to that divine revelation of the holy ſcriptures which
they had before received. It ſeems they were not
willing to admit and ſwallow contradictions in their
faith. And we deſire no more of the church of
Rome, than that they would encourage the people
"to ſearch the ſcriptures daily," and to examine
whether their doctrines be according to them. We
would be glad to hear the pope and a general coun-
cil commend to the people the ſearching of the ſcrip-
tures; and to try their definitions of faith and decrees
of worſhip by that rule, to ſee whether what they have
defined, and decreed to be believed and practiſed, be
agreeable to it; their worſhip of Images; their ſolemn
invocation of angels, and of the bleſſed virgin, and
the ſaints departed; the ſacrament under one kind
only; the publick prayers and ſervice of God in an
unknown tongue; the frequent repetition of the pro-
pitiatory ſacrifice of CHRIST's body and blood in
the maſs. Had the Bereans been at the council of
Trent, and pleaded their right "to ſearch the ſcrip-
"tures, whether theſe things were ſo," I doubt,
they would have been thought very troubleſome and
imperti-

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impertinent, and would not have been praised by the pope and council for their pains, as they are by St. Luke.

You see then, upon the whole matter, that it is a very groundless and suspicious pretence of the church of Rome, that because they are infallibly in the right, and theirs is the true religion, therefore their people must not be permitted to examine it. The doctrine of the apostles was undoubtedly the true faith of CHRIST; and yet they not only permitted the people to examine it, but exhorted and encouraged them so to do, and commended them for it: and any man, that hath the spirit of a man, must abhor to submit to this slavery, not to be allowed to examine his religion, and to enquire freely into the grounds and reasons of it; and would break with any church in the world upon this single point; and would tell them plainly, if your religion be too good to be examined, I doubt it is too bad to be believed.

If it be said, that the allowing of this liberty is the way to make people perpetually doubting and unfettled; I do utterly deny this, and do on the contrary with good reason affirm, that it is apt to have the contrary effect; there being in reason no better way to establish any man in the belief of any thing, than to let him see that there are very good grounds and reasons for what he believes; which no man can ever see, that is not permitted to examine whether there be such reasons or not. So that, besides the reasonableness of the thing, it is of great benefit and advantage to us; and that upon these accounts.

1. To

1. To arm us against seducers. He that hath SERM. LVIII. examined his religion, and tried the grounds of it, is most able to maintain them, and make them good against all assaults that may be made upon us, to move us from our steadfastness: whereas he that hath not examined, and consequently does not understand the reasons of his religion, is liable "to be tossed to and fro, and to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and the cunning craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive." For when he is attempted, he will either defend his religion, or not: if he undertake the defence of it before he hath examined the grounds of it, he makes himself an easy prey to every crafty man that will set upon him; he exposeth at once himself to danger, and his religion to disgrace: if he decline the defence of it, he must be forced to take sanctuary in that ignorant and obstinate principle, that because he is of an infallible church, and sure that he is in the right, therefore he never did nor will examine whether he be so or not. But how is he, or can he be sure that he is in the right; if he have no other reason for it, but his confidence, and his being "wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason?" It is a shameful thing in a wise man, who is able to give a good reason of all other actions and parts of his life, to be able to say nothing for his religion, which concerns him more than all the rest.

2. To examine and understand the grounds of our religion, will be a good means (by the assistance of God's grace) to keep us constant to it,

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even under the fiery trial. When it comes to this, that a man must suffer for his religion, he had need to be well established in the belief of it; which no man can so well be, as he that in some measure understands the grounds and reasons of his belief. A man would be well assured of the truth and goodness of that for which he would lay down his life; otherwise he dies as a fool dies, he knows not for what. A man would be loth to set such a seal to a blank, I mean to that which he hath no sufficient ground and reason to believe to be true; which, whether he hath or not, no man that hath not examined the grounds of his religion can be well assured of. This St. Peter prescribes, as the best preparative for suffering for righteousness sake, the first epistle of Peter, iii. 14, 15.

“but if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are
 “ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither
 “be troubled; but sanctify the LORD GOD in your
 “hearts; (that is, make him the great object of
 “your dread and trust) and be ready always to
 “give an answer to every man that asketh you a
 “reason of the hope that is in you.”

Secondly, “the holding fast the profession of
 “our faith without wavering,” doth not imply, that men should obstinately refuse to hear any reason against that religion which they have embraced, and think to be the true religion. As men should examine before they choose; so after they have chosen, they should be ready to be better informed, if better reason can be offered. No man ought to think himself so infallible as to be privileged from
 hearing

hearing reason, and from having his doctrines and dictates tried by that test.

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Our blessed SAVIOUR himself, the most infallible person that ever was in the world, and “ who declared the truth which he had heard of God,” yet he offered himself and his doctrine to this trial. John viii. 46. “ which of you convinceth me of “ sin ? ” that is, of falshood and error ? “ and if I “ speak the truth, why do ye not believe me ? ” he was sure he spake the truth ; and yet for all that, if they could convince him of error and mistake, he was ready to hear any reason they could bring to that purpose. Though a man be never so sure that he is in the true religion, and never so resolved to continue constant and stedfast in it ; yet reason is always to be heard, when it is fairly offered. And as we ought always to be “ ready to give an answer to “ those who ask a reason of the hope and faith that “ is in us ; ” so ought we likewise to be ready to hear the reasons which others do fairly offer against our opinion and persuasion in religion, and to debate the matter with them ; that if we be in the right, and they in the wrong, we may rectify their mistake, “ and instruct them in meekness, if “ God peradventure may give them repentance to “ the acknowledgment of the truth. ”

We are not only to examine our religion, before we peremptorily fix upon it ; but after we are, as we think upon the best reason, establish'd and settled in it. Tho' we ought not to doubt and waver in our religion upon every slight and trifling objection that can be brought against it ; yet we

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ought always to have an ear open to hear reason, and consider any thing of weight and moment that can be offered to us about it. For it is a great disparagement to truth, and argues a distrust of the goodness of our cause and religion, to be afraid to hear what can be said against it; as if truth were so weak, that in every conflict it were in danger to be baffled and run down, and go by the worst; and as if the reasons that could be brought against it, were too hard for it, and not to be encounter'd by those forces which truth has on its side.

We have that honest confidence of the goodness of our cause and religion, that we do not fear what can be said against it; and therefore we do not forbid our people to examine the objections of our adversaries, and to read the best books they can write against it. But the church of Rome are so wise in their generation, that they will not permit those of their communion to hear or read what can be said against them: nay, they will not permit the people the use of the holy scriptures, which they, with us, acknowledge to be at least an essential part of the rule of faith. They tell their people, that after they are once of their church and religion, they ought not to hear any reasons against it; and though they be never so strong, they ought not to entertain any doubt concerning it; because all doubting is a temptation of the devil, and a mortal sin. But surely that church is not to be heard, which will not hear reason; nor that religion to be much admired, which will not allow those that have once embrac'd it, to hear it ever after debated and examined.

mined. This is a very suspicious business, and argues, that either they have not truth on their side; or that truth is a weak, and pitiful, and sneaking thing, and not able to make its party good against error.

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I should now have proceeded in the second place, to shew positively what is implied, "in holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering;" and then to have considered the argument and encouragement hereto, "because he is faithful that promised." But I shall proceed no farther at this time.

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JOHN i. 47. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.* P. 787

SERMON LVI.

HEB. xi. 17, 18, 19. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son: of whom*



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whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

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HEB. xi. 24, 25. *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*

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HEB. x. 23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.*

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